



Remember 202 Hodgepodge

*...the completely
disorganized thoughts of an idiotic
scientist...*

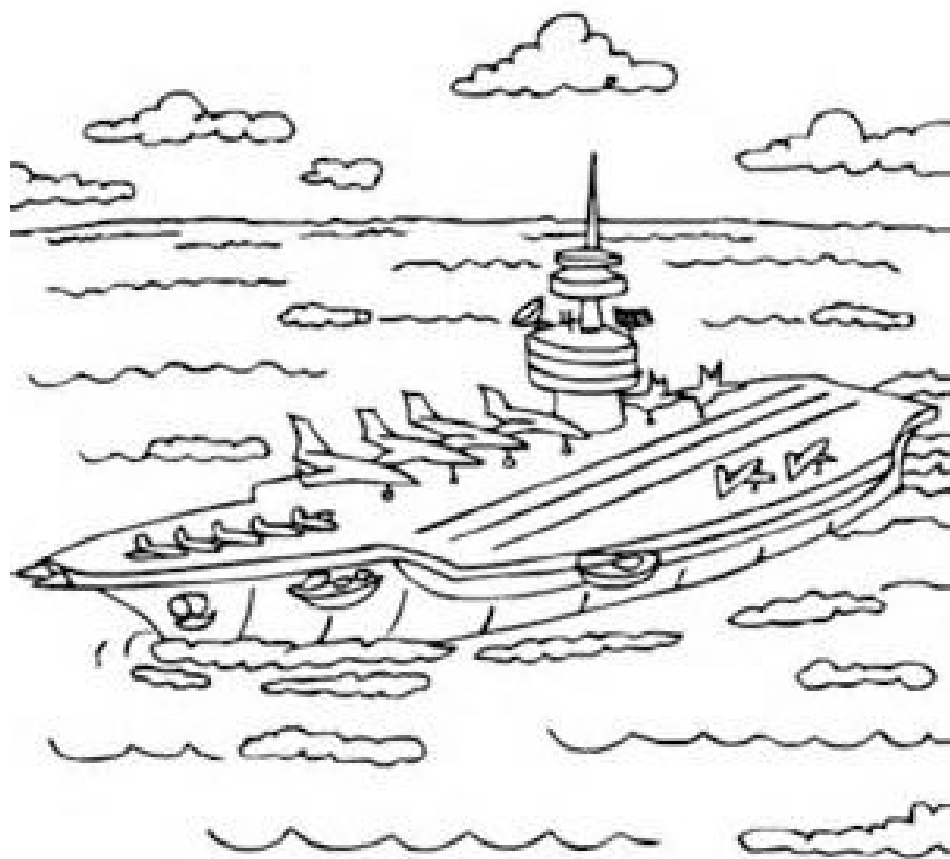
by Dr. Joey Bone

Booklet Nine

Preface

Some say that fine art is little more than a subconscious gift, thrust upon the ever struggling sentient mind, by life's struggles. And though, I've have my share of struggles, I can absolutely guarantee you that none of this scribble qualifies as anything approaching art. Albeit, I'd like to tell you that this mare's nest is factual and unelaborated, or even partially based on truth, unfortunately each and every scintilla of this scrawl is complete invention. Everything on these poorly written pages is purely contrived. These dusty pages contain far too many boring redundancies, and rude lengthy segues, so if you enjoy a steady train of well written purposeful logic, this is not the book for you. If I could have afforded it, I'd have hired an editor, since I have a total lack of patience for editing. After all, it's the idea that's important, not how well you describe it. If you recognize anything in here, which you think remotely smacks of reality, it is purely coincidental, and nothing more! This is not to say that coincidence can't be remarkable or interesting, for indeed it often is, and usually more so than the rest of the stuff.

OB



LEARNING TO PAY ATTENTION

The *USS Lexington* is a well maintained WWII carrier. After the war, it was used by the US Navy for flight training, as well as for a few covert things. It's also known for having the hardest, most violent, CAT-shot (catapult assisted launching of an aircraft) in the Navy. The 888 foot ship was the fourth Navy ship named for the Battle of Lexington, which may have been the first battle of the revolutionary war, circa 1775. Over two hundred years later, jet pilots from the naval air station in San Carlos, Florida would practice their carrier landings on the *Lady Lex*. The student carrier landing qualifications are still called, 'carrier quals.' Each novice pilot had to successfully complete carrier quals to be able to join the replacement air groups (the RAG), or a squadron out in a fleet. To the best of my knowledge, the *USS Lexington* is now only a floating museum, in Corpus Christi, Texas; much as is the battleship, the *USS Alabama*, here in Mobile, Alabama.

When I was onboard *The Lady Lex*, back in the early 1980s, occasionally she was used to secretly launch and retrieve A-7s, a light attack jet, then being flown over Nicaragua for clandestine reconnaissance purposes, and maybe for dropping

the occasional covert bomb on drug lord compounds, drug manufacturing plants, some corrupt government official's home or office, or on some rebel jungle encampment, in Central or South America. But most frequently, the planes just did photo reconnaissance. The carrier was usually just a place to: land, arm-up with a bomb or two, refuel, and take off. After dropping the ordinance, they'd return to and land on *The Lady Lex*, again refuel, and take-off to head back to some US base.

<http://www.usslexington.com>

Late one night, while sitting in the ship's mess hall, called the gee-dunk, I was eating 'sliders' (hamburgers), when a brown shoe (a pilot), who was about to fly back to the mainland, talked about dropping something called a 'paper bomb,' on some drug lord. He called it a 'paper bomb,' because the bomb's casing was made out of a mixture of flammable glue and highly compressed cellulose. Apparently, those bombs were all the rage, since they were virtually undetectable and untraceable, after they exploded. The idea behind the design was that it left no evidence, which could be traced back to the

United States... no pieces of the flammable bomb casing could be found. Furthermore, the pilot wouldn't even fly, within miles of the target, and so no one on the ground would even have heard the plane.

In the black of night, twenty miles from the target, the pilot, who was then flying at high altitude, would program the coordinates of the target into the targeting computer, and push the stick forward, placing his plane into a fairly steep dive. At some point as indicated by the onboard targeting computer, he'd pull back on the stick, forcing the plane into a high speed arcing climb. When the aircraft hit some point on the vertical, the computer would release the bomb from its' hard point. The released bomb would then climb upward and out toward the target, yet miles away. As the bomb travels toward the target, the plane would have rolled over, and gone into a gradual dive, heading in the opposite direction it had been traveling, and away from the target. This bombing release maneuver was called, the 'over-the-shoulder-shot.' It was also the planned method for a fighter to deliver a nuke. When the bomb detonated, the plane might be about fifty miles away, flying below the radar,

and over non-populated areas. As stated, people close to the target would not have heard or seen a plane fly over, and no bomb fragments would be found, so the locals would simply assume that someone had trucked in a bomb.

That night eating in the gee-dunk, the pilot also talked on about the corporation, which manufactured paper bombs, and how much one of those covert bombs cost. The price of one such thousand pounder was through the roof. Every bit of the weapon would be vaporized in the explosion. To manufacture the weapon, the glue-cellulose mixture was simply injected into a mold, originally made from a conventional thousand pound bomb casing. *It's good not to be a drug lord.*

Drop it from fighter at night, on a bomb making plant, and it would merely seem like someone had snuck a bomb into the plant, or some plant worker had just gotten careless. It's amazing the kind of information you can pick-up just hanging-out with operational people. The paper bomb is no longer classified. Since then, I've often wondered, if a cruise missile could be made of glue-cellulose? Why not?

[discuss/duboard.php?](#)

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For about one week, I worked at familiarizing myself with a tiny fraction of the carrier operations, since trying to comprehend all the things which go on to operate a carrier lends new meaning to the phrase, ‘impossibly complex.’ The lab to which I had been temporarily assigned, was interested in the pilots’ carrier landing performance, assessing those physical and psychological factors, which might make a superior carrier pilot. The primary focus was on night carrier landings, since at times those landings are the most difficult aspect of the pilots job. In those days, I was primarily interested in what aspects of the human eye and what visual attributes, most contributed to a pilot successfully landing on a moving carrier deck, at O dark thirty, when there were very few visual cues for the pilot’s mind to work with.

That carrier visit was supposed to provide me with a practical education, and needless to say, it was more than I could handle. Before landing onboard the floating metal beast, I’d received no instruction, and no advice. At that time in my

briefcase, I carried the carrier landing scores for the F-14 pilots in the US Navy (Every carrier landing is graded 1 though 4, with a 4 being a perfect score/landing.), their vision test scores, *MMPI* (*Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory*, a psych test) profiles, as well as their IQ scores. Back then, if I recall correctly, the lowest IQ score for fleet F-14 pilots was 142. Simply put, the dumbest one of the group was a bona fide genius. Their psych tests showed they were largely high on the aggression scale, but rock solid, as far as mental stability was concerned. However, their eyes were incredible, running between 20/10 to 20/02, for visual acuity. Those visual acuity scores were based on people with 20/20 vision. If a person has visual acuity of 20/02, it means they can see at 20 feet, which a person with 20/20 vision needs to be at 2 feet to see. Needless to say, the US government doesn't like their multimillion dollar aircraft to be flown, by your run-of-the-mill Joe. The guys that fly the 'fast movers' for the US Navy were truly amazing men, and if you don't believe me, just ask them. Yes, they typically have egos to match their IQs. At least, back then, they did. As of late, the selection procedures have changed.

For the vast majority of fleet pilots, night carrier landings can be a harrowing experience, even for those guys, who are relatively fearless. In bad weather, a night carrier landing may literally appear like death itself, especially since more than a few men have perished, attempting that high risk undertaking. Without exception, those carrier pilots, with whom I've had the privilege of speaking, told me that the night carrier landing was by far the most risky aspect of flying, but of course, they wouldn't say that the night carrier landings were scary, just risky.

The night carrier landing is a bit like living through a controlled crash where the plane goes from around 130 mph to 0 mph in just over one-second. This makes the pilot happily feel like his head, arms, and legs have just been separated from his body. I've been told that someone did a study in Vietnam, where carrier pilots were hooked-up with EKG recording equipment. The results indicated that the pilots heart rates and breathing rates were higher during the night carry recoveries (landings), than during aerial combat missions, when they were shooting and getting shot at. Correspondingly, most of the carrier pilots I spoke with told me that the

night carrier landing can be more dangerous than air-to-air combat, known as, dogfighting.

Nevertheless, combat pilots are alleged to not experience fear, and to a large measure, I do honestly believe that is not too far from the real truth. Quite possibly the ‘fear-producing’ parts of their brain’s amygdalae are probably relatively small or overly controlled. Since I’m hardly a brave man, they do seem amazing to me.

Many people believe that groups, like the: Navy *SEALs*, rangers, force recon, green berets, Delta Force, Night Stalkers, etc., are the cream of the US military. While these truly are inarguably extremely capable and courageous folks, in my humble and highly inexperienced opinion, the combat carrier pilot is at the pinnacle, and definitely the sharpest spear in the military’s inventory. This is especially evident, when you think about what kinds of weapons they can bring-to-bare, the rate at which they can deliver those weapons, and the intelligence, skill, and courage which is required to effectively operate a highly complicated modern-day, supersonic fast-mover in an ever-changing combat scenario with variable weather conditions, not to mention the lethal weapons which can be brought to bare against

them, during the mission. The combat pilot is in control of roughly a \$45 to \$300 million piece of super-sexy ultra-thrilling cutting-edge supersonic equipment. The new F-35 runs around \$98 million, each.

[https://www.google.com/search?](https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=cost+of+f-15&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8#q=cost+of+f-35)

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While combat pilots are generally in great shape, usually they are not the supreme physical specimens, which the other above-mentioned special-ops groups are, yet they are nevertheless the perfect blend of balls and brains, as well as having vastly superior visual acuity, and according to psych testing, have not the slightest lack of confidence. After all, you definitely don't want a sensitive somewhat uncertain man flying combat missions. You want the cocky fearless genius guy, who knows he's going to win that air-to-air fight, even when his aircraft is experiencing hydraulic and electrical problems, no missiles are left, only thirty rounds ammo remain in the guns, and only one minute of fuel remains in the tank. In my biased opinion, the combat pilots are the

finest representatives of United States military. It is rumored that they often make bad husbands, largely owing to massive egos, and that's probably because ego and confidence share a lot of common brain tissue. Oh sure, the definitions of the two words are different, but all psychologically descriptive terms are but poor attempts to describe near incomprehensible neural complexities.

When I was studying fighter pilots, they seemed to me to be brave, egoistical, brilliant, balls-to-the-wall warriors. Lots of women are attracted to such qualities, but then when it comes to the long haul, the women often can't tolerate the constant ego. While great sex will keep most women in a relationship, longer than it will most men, over time a screaming festering ego can drive most people to look elsewhere. Still, I have known a few combat pilots, who managed to somehow sustain longterm marriages; my Dad being one of them.

Some night carrier landings are an absolute nightmare. The pilot is bleeding off airspeed, dropping altitude, and rocketing out of a moonless night at zero dark thirty. While he's punching his way through a churning rain-filled black sky, complete with loud thunder and blinding lightning

bolts, he's less than 200 feet off the surface of a storm tossed jet black invisible ocean, filled with monstrous waves. Fast approaching the ass end of a nearly invisible aircraft carrier, takes a set of big balls to maintain the required focus and control. The storm tossed carrier first appears as a giant vague steel apparition, rising and falling on the huge violent invisible ocean waves. As the pilot closes-in, he drops down to roughly 150 above the water. A few seconds later, he's down to 100 feet above the water. The vast black deep ocean awaits to swallow the plane and pilot, and the unforgiving steel stern of the carrier patiently waits for the careless pilot to slam himself into it, Should the pilot fly a tad too low. Its called a 'ramp-strike,' and such a crash at night resembles a loud huge ball of orange flame. More than a few pilots have bought the farm that way. All that is needed is a slight unexpected downdraft, just before reaching the carrier, or an unexpected ocean wave to lift the ass end of the carrier.

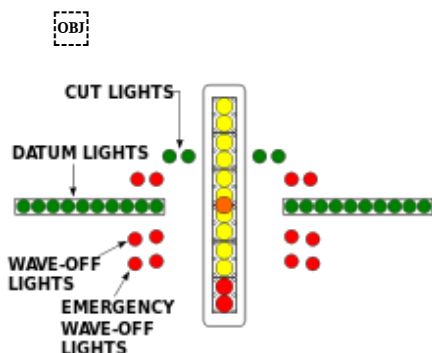
While trying to stay on glide-slope (the proper path of flight leading to a landing), with the correct angle of attack and decent rate, the massive ocean waves are moving the ass end of the carrier up,

down, and around, while a hard driving rain is soaking the plane's windscreen, and sudden stiff gusts of gale force winds are blowing the plane randomly about the sky. In a true combat scenario, the pilot may be attempting this landing, not having slept for days. For visual cues, there is only a swaying string of small white lights, loosely hanging and swinging about, off the carrier's stern, similar to a long string of Christmas tree lights, and the only other visual clue, assisting the pilot, is the Fresnel lens, which sits on a small metal framework, positioned just off the port side of the carrier's flight deck.

The man who discovered that lens was Augustin-Jean Fresnel (1788-1827), a French civil engineer and physicist, who was around long before aviation, but who was one of the principals in the development wave optics. His equations on waves and reflectivity formed the basis for many applications used in computer graphics, today; clearly, he was a man far ahead of his time, by at least a couple of centuries. He may be best known for inventing the use of 'stepped lenses,' used to extend the light of light houses, and saving countless lives.

When approaching the rear carrier at night, the

Fresnel lens usually (some on certain carriers are a different colors) appears as a small bright green line of lights with a small space or gap in the middle. A round red dot of light, called ‘the ball, or the meatball,’ moves up and down vertically through that gap in the horizontal green line. When the red light or the meatball is situated in the gap, and is directly between the two green lines, the pilot is not too high and not too low; he’s right on the correct glide-slope, and headed for a good landing.



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/
Optical_landing_system](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Optical_landing_system)

When the red meatball is above the two green lines (datum lights), the pilot is too high, but if the red light is below the two green lines, he's too low and headed for the rear end of the carrier, and in danger of the aforementioned deadly explosive collision with the ship, ergo its time to add power and pull up. If the pilot powers-up and abandons the landing attempt, it's called a 'wave-off.' There's nothing shameful about a wave-off, since nothing spoils a landing, quite like detonating on the steel stern of the carrier.

On approach for the night carrier landing, the pilot flies with the plane's nose angled upward and the tail slightly low, this angle of approach (AOA) is approximately 15 degrees, but each plane has its own particular AOA. In that position, to gain altitude, the pilot simply adds power by pushing the throttle forward, or to reduce altitude, the pilot pulls back on the throttle, reducing power. This way the throttle is used to control the altitude, and the vertical position on the glide-slope. The rudder pedals, upon which rest the pilots feet, control his left and right movements. In a successful landing, the jet-fighter passes in low over the ass end of the flight deck, attempting to snag one of four parallel cables

stretched side-to-side across the back-end of the deck. The four wires sit about three or four inches above the deck. From underneath the tail end of the jet, and attached to the empennage (the tail assembly which incorporates vertical and horizontal stabilizing braces) of the aircraft, hangs roughly a six foot long strong metal tail-hook, also known as the ‘arresting hook.’ It’s designed to snag one of those four wires, or arresting cables.

In 1911, Eugene Ely landed his small light airplane on a platform located on the *USS Pennsylvania*, an armored cruiser. That was probably the first successful shipboard landing, and Eugene indeed used a tail-hook. The pilot, and a circus performer, had worked together to design and build the first tail-hook, and arresting assembly. Somehow, it seems appropriate, that a circus performer was involved, for indeed night carrier operations are the *Greatest Show on Earth*, and they’re one of the most dangerous human undertakings. This is especially true, when they’re conducted during combat.

Of the four available arresting cables, the third cable, which the plane flies over, is considered as the ‘ideal’ one to snag. Once the plane hooks the wire, it (the wire/cable) is pulled out, but it tightens as it

plays out, using a powerful electric braking system, to stop the plane. This system stops the plane in about twenty yards. If the plane's tail-hook fails to snag any of the four wires, it's called a 'bolter,' so when landing, the pilot doesn't ever power down, but shoves the throttle forward to power-up, just as his plane touches down.

As soon as the pilot feels the wheels impact the deck, he jams the throttle forward and fully powers up, in case the plane misses hooking any of the four arresting wires. By throttling up into afterburner (more fuel is pumped into the flame coming out the back of the turbo engine), so a huge bluish flame blasts out from the tail of the plane, and thus, the pilot may then have adequate power to make it back into the air, before heading back off the carrier's deck, and dropping into the ever merciless dark ocean. Since I'm definitely not a pilot, I've only landed and taken off a carrier as a passenger. To me the landing, by far, is the most dramatic of the two. Most people think it's the takeoff, called the 'cat-shot,' the catapult launch.

Now try just to imagine what it would be like landing on a carrier, during a major storm in the black of night! Your target, the carrier deck is being

violently moved around by unseen behemoth black ocean waves, you're coming in at high speed, the little string of white lights, which is hanging-off the rear-end of the boat is being blown around like a piece of straw in a tornado, the wind is wafting your plane around like a leaf, so that your plane is suddenly and unpredictably being flung up, down, right, or left. The deluge of rain on your windscreen makes it next to impossible to see, the little green and red Fresnel lens, or the string of drop-light hanging off the stern. Still, you got your instruments, and a guy talking is in your ears, trying to help guide you in for a successful landing, all the while, you're sweating bullets.

Now, if that isn't bad enough, then add to this nightmarish scenario the unpleasant variables, which combat brings along. Maybe you're nearly out of fuel, or you've had no sleep in three days, or perchance your plane has had holes blown through it, so the controls aren't responding correctly, the plane's instruments aren't functioning correctly, and your radio is shot out. Maybe your radio is out. Perhaps you've just witnessed your wingman turned into a flaming ball of fire by a missile strike. You could be wounded and in severe pain, losing blood

by the bucket load, and your controls are slick with your warm blood. This is the reason that the naval carrier combat pilot needs to be a man with big balls and big brains! Honest folks, would you really want a compassionate sensitive man running a show like I just described? Hell no! You want the confident arrogant bastard with the mega-ego, the high IQ, and that huge pair of brass bull balls.

The big gonads (actually its parts of the brain with testosterone receptors, but make no mistake, the gonads do furnish the necessary testosterone) allow the combat aviator to set aside the fear of eminent death, so that his big brain can unscrambled the ever changing, and monstrosly complex task of the combat night carrier landing, during a storm. Think you could manage that? I'd like to think I could, but I'm fairly positive, I couldn't. Those carrier combat pilots are marvelous courageous freaks of nature. God bless all men, who fight for freedom, regardless of their inherent abilities, and regardless of what hidden motives their greedy political and corporate puppet masters may possess. Lots of folks can be heard to casually say, "Thank you for your service," but few have an honest clue, for what they are thanking the veteran; still, its good they express their

appreciation. When I was young, I used to hear about college students cursing and spitting on returning vets, because of the illegitimacy of the war. Indeed, I feel that war was not justified, but how does someone curse and spit on a person, who has put their life on the line, for what they believed was a good and just cause? At worse the veteran is guilty of being ignorant of political motives.

In carrier air operations, the carrier pilot is not the only one who's runs a big risk. The carrier deck is one of the most dangerous and dynamic pieces of real-estate on the blue marble. During air ops, the deck has claimed the lives of many, especially during night combat sorties in bad weather. Whenever, someone is working on the carrier deck and air ops are going on, their life is in serious peril.

Survival of the deck crew demands that they remain constantly vigilante. The dimly lit, hard wet storm-tossed carrier deck has got planes coming-in out of the dark like speeding indy cars. Concurrently, jets are being shot off the bow by brutally powerful high speed steam catapults, all the while those jets are sweeping the deck with their long electric blue molten hot exhaust flames. Surveillance E-2s are coming and going, with their ever threatening twin

pair of propellers, just waiting for the languid worker to step too close, and be hacked into pieces. If a crewman is chopped to ribbons, his tragic death is not the only problem. The destroyed propeller blades mean that for a considerable period of time the carrier, or perhaps its entire battle group (carrier, two cruisers, two destroyers, one or two frigates, two subs, and one of two supply ships), will have a reduced protective surveillance screen, thereby becoming more vulnerable to possible enemy attack.

Besides the various fixed-wing aircraft, helicopters, affectionately referred to as ‘angels,’ periodically touch-down and lift-off the carrier deck. Their job is to rescue downed pilots and to help search for enemy subs, using sonobuoys, and if need be torpedoes. As if all that isn’t hazardous enough, there’s fuel lines, to trip over, and the deck is usually covered in a rough steel, spiky-like coating, designed to tear someone’s skin down to the bone, should they slip and fall. The noise of equipment and jet engines is so loud that the brain goes silent, and you’ve got to wear only partially effective hearing protection, to prevent permanent hearing loss. Still, the sounds are so loud that the deck crew’s guts literally vibrate, and even with the hearing protection, the bones of

the skull vibrate so loudly, that many deck workers go deaf early in life. To spice-up the danger, during combat operations, there are carts filled with various types of: bombs, missiles, and belts of bullets, just waiting to collide with a plane, or visa versa. It has happened that bombs have gotten loose on the rolling carrier deck, and as you might imagine, the results haven't always been pleasant. Not to mention, that occasionally a plane collides, with another plane. If the plane has bombs on board, there goes the entire carrier, with thousands on board, with all those expensive planes. But even if unarmed, the aircraft is like a bomb itself.

Violent winds may be coming from over the bow, waves may be causing the deck to shake, rise and fall, and rotate. Jet intakes can suck a man in, never to return, and all of that is just business, as usual. Too many things can go wrong: a fire lights-off a fuel line, a crippled plane coming in all wrong, crashes and explodes on the deck, a plane breaks down and slows operations so planes low on fuel can't land, fuel gets spilled on the deck and ignites, equipment fails, the arresting wires stop working or snap, with the snapped cable cutting men in half, the catapult malfunctions, an elevator stops working, a blast-

shield jams, etc. The carrier deck is a disaster, waiting to happen. Air operations (air-ops) are not for idiots. The gloriously complex stage supports a play where the actors are constantly dancing with old father time. Perhaps, combat carrier operations are the most unappreciated deadly spectacle on earth.

At night during a storm, all this carrier deck insanity is conducted under dimly lit yellowish sodium vapor lights, turning everything into a barely visible surreal incubus, sort of like an old black and white movie. Death only requires one neuron to misfire in someone's fatigued brain, to claim his prize. Working the carrier deck at night is like playing football in the dark on the Indy 500 track, while the race is going on, during an earthquake, while a hurricane is blowing and sheets of rain and bow spray are hitting the deck crew in the face. These are the types of brave men, who politicians often abuse, for their own greedy agendas, and those of various mega corporations, i.e., profitable wars without just cause.

Just look at how many Americans blindly worship: Hollywood actors, TV news commentators, sports figures, as well as popular music stars!

Perchance, some of such people may well be somewhat admirable, but I wonder if any of them could regularly perform night carrier landings, or conduct air operations on a heaving carrier deck, especially during a combat scenario, and /or storm. Do any of them have the courage and intelligence, which those unknown combat pilots possess, or those goys on the flight deck? And while you worship those sports figures, singers, and Hollywood actors, think about the small fact that those carrier pilots and deck crews are hanging it all out, risking their lives, to protect you, as well as those stars.

People in TV shows, movies, sports, etc., are working in their job for the fame and fortune, and get paid ungodly fortunes, for doing comparatively little. Most combat missions remain clandestine, hence no fame, and certainly no fortune. The pilots rarely receive any real celebrity. The pay of these combat pilots averages around \$65,000 per year. [Sports](#) figure, Floyd Mayweatherly and Manny Pacquiaol, got to split a \$300 million purse, for one fight, for less than two hours of work. Sure they train a lot, but so do combat pilots, and deck crews. Basketball and football players get paid for having fun. Golfers make unbelievable amounts of money for

no risk at all. Again... The combat pilot, faces far more deadly threats: missiles, antiaircraft fire, night carrier landings, ejections, aircraft malfunctions, attack from enemy aircraft, sudden downdrafts and cross winds, lightning strikes, bird strikes, air traffic, severe and sudden downdrafts and turbulence, etc. What does it say about your average American, that they can so easily overlook truly great people in favor popular fluff? Perhaps it has something to do with America's deteriorating educational system. Just how exciting is it that someone sings a song, or does something with a ball (basketball, football, tennis ball, golf ball, soccer ball, etc.), or that someone pretends to be someone else on the silver screen? Jesus, often actors run for political office, regardless of their actual wherewithal. Sure the above popular things take talent, but honestly how important are those bands, athletes, and actors? At best, they are entertaining, without significant danger.

No one shoots missiles or antiaircraft guns at music stars, sports figures, or Hollywood actors. Stars don't get locked-up in enemy prison camps for years at a time, to be starved, worked to death, and/or tortured. For just a moment, give a little thought to those star's motives, and their particular abilities, in

comparison to those of a relatively unknown combat pilot, or deck crewman. This is not to say celebrities do not have fine attributes, many do. But in my humble opinion, they don't compare to those of a courageous capable combat pilot. Why is it that most Americans overlook the valiant warriors, in favor of film, music, and sports stars? What really blows my mind is how so many Americans watch phony wrestling shows. Not to sound like an elitist, for after reading this hodgepodge, you damn well know I am not, but isn't that fake wrestling the dumbest crap ever broadcast? In my book, you've got to be an absolute moron to watch that idiocy, and it's not just that's it fake, but that it's so *obviously* fake.

No one said that being honest can't make you look like an asshole.

The Truth about Truth by Adrian M. E. Willory

Like a hyena in the lion's den, onboard the aircraft carrier, I was lucky enough to have my own room in the pilot's sleeping area, just under the flight deck, close to one of the forward catapults. As mentioned, I'm a bad sleeper; so one night, after

maybe thirty minutes of sleep, I woke-up hungry and went to the galley for a late night slider (hamburger) and a coke. Afterwards, I climbed the steel stairs up to the flight deck to see if anything was going on. Looking out the hatch of the integrated island (the building-like structure on the carrier deck), the steel of which still held the heat from the long gone sun, I scanned the dark sky above the fantail (the stern) of the giant ship, and saw that no planes were approaching. There were only the bright stars, as I stepped onto the unlit black deck.

A cool brine-filled wind was traveling from bow toward the stern. The ship was heading into the wind to better slow the incoming aircraft and thereby facilitate their landings, and so I figured that even though I couldn't see the lights of an approaching plane, one might soon be arriving, and so I realized that soon I'd best vacate the landing part of the deck. The cool air felt good and relaxed me. That was my first mistake, for only a fool relaxes on a carrier deck. Since this wasn't a giant carrier, the darkened deck was about 866 feet from stem to stern, and about 105 feet wide. Standing on the unlit flat carrier deck, the dark limitless Gulf of Mexico and star-filled black sky were hypnotic; worse yet, it was late and I'd just eaten.

Looking at the stern, I saw something move, then realized it was the silhouette of the LSO (Landing Signal Officer). The officer was barely discernible, standing down to my left, on the port aft corner of the angle deck, in a small area appropriately referred to as the 'LSO platform.' If you're a pilot on approach for a landing, the LSO will be standing on the left-hand corner (the port corner) of the carrier deck, which is closest to you, the incoming pilot. In a way, the LSO places himself in harm's way, because he stands within a few feet of the left wing tip of the plane, when it hits the deck, and quite often the plane deviates from its intended direction of flight.

The LSO, wearing a headset, is a bit like a blessed angel, speaking to the pilot on his radio and guiding him in, hopefully to snag the ideal three-wire, as he's flying toward the ass-end of the carrier. It's the LSO's job to talk the pilot in, helping him to make the necessary power and directional adjustments, and thereby reduce the 'pucker-factor' (a reference to the external anal sphincter muscle) of the highly dangerous situation. Generally, the LSO must be a highly experienced carrier pilot to function to perform the tasking. Often, pilots have favorites, when it comes to LSOs, who are generally other

pilots within their squadron. Albeit, highly experienced carrier pilots often stand-in, when need be. Trust is a immeasurably major factor in an air attack squadron. As I walked over to the LSO platform area, he was just putting on his head gear (ear-phones and mike), to allow him to communicate with inbound planes. Scanning the skies, I still didn't see any lights, to indicate an approaching aircraft.

“You expecting some planes to be hit'n (landing on) the boat (the carrier), this late LSO?” I lazily asked.

“Yeah, we got some A-7s, coming in from Nicaragua, for a quick refuel and bounce back to base. They been do'n a little recon on the rebels.”

“How many?”

“Flight of four... just a few minutes out, Joey. They're a bit stretched (low on fuel), so I want to get'm in first try... no wave-offs or bolters. Don't want anyone going swimming, tonight. Besides, we don't have any angels (rescue helicopters) up, and one of the four pilots is sick. He's puck'n in the cockpit, and worse yet, he's a bit of a new-be (pilot with little experience). So, it could get kind'a hinky (dangerous). Right now, they're still down below the

horizon.” The LSO explained, briefly gesturing to the invisible dark western horizon, behind the carrier. The dark sky and water looked like one solid black slate, except where the wake of the carrier had stirred-up the beautiful bioluminescence.

We were somewhere just northwest of Cuba. Every now and then, a Russian built, Cuban mig would venture forth from the big island, but would never come too close; after all, we weren’t close to their territorial waters. They just wanted us to know they existed. Their planes launched from a military base in Pinar del Rio, where many years ago, the US military had once operated. The Cubans would never think about striking the US military, short of our invading them... too many well equipped military bases in Florida. Just the deadly stuff at *Herlburt Field* and *Eglin Air Force Base*, alone could probably demolished Cuba’s defenses. The island would have been turned into rubble, in the blink of an eye, since in the military, speed tends to translate into an advantage. Two fully armed F-14s sat in the hanger bay, to be brought-up and launched if the Cuban migs got within sixty miles. Consequently, there were two air-dales (pilots) and two RIOs (radar intercept officers, back-seaters) always on stand-by.

Out in the Gulf of Mexico at night, many miles from land, the air is extraordinarily clean and clear, and the stars are far brighter than when on land, with all its' corresponding pollution and competing lights. The huge eerie glowing phosphorescent carrier wake was trailing out behind us. Those visual effects together with the pleasant breeze, the extra large burger with all the trimming I'd just eaten, and the late hour, were all making me too comfortably drowsy; it was almost like being in a warm dream. Twenty-twenty hindsight says, I now realize I should have gone back to bed, but foolishly I had stayed on the LSO platform, gazing down at the glowing carrier wake, and at the countless brilliant stars.

Earlier that day, I'd spent the afternoon watching student jet pilots performing their first required landings, their carrier quals (qualifications). The student pilots were flying T-2s, a training jet with more power than anything flown in WWII, or the Korean war. These training jets were affectionately known as, 'Guppies.' The word guppy worked well for two reasons. One was that the bulging belly shape of the jet trainer's fuselage looked remarkably like the shape of the tiny fish, and the other reason was that it was flown by beginner pilots, soon to grow-up,

and be accepted in the RAG, replacement air group, who could eventually feed into the active fleet as needed, to become mainstream carrier pilots in the fleet, and traveling the world.

The carrier qualifications were the first major step in separating the wheat from the chaff, trying to determine, which students had the big balls and brilliant brains, and who didn't. Naval aviators and naval flight officers from the late 1950s, up till around 2004, got their carrier landing training flying the T-2 *Buckeye*. Earlier that day, plane after plane had hit the boat without serious mishap. However, some of the guys just couldn't manage a successful landing, continuously waving-off or boltering, so they'd have to fly back to the land base. They could still be military pilots, but just not be allowed to continue to the RAG, and then maybe the fleet.

The day before I arrived on the carrier, a highly experienced pilot had hit the deck, boltered, and apparently failed to power up, or if he had the plane had failed to respond to the throttle. His plane had gone over the port edge. The plane had splashed down into the drink, but the pilot had successfully ejected, barely in time. As the plane was just touching the water, the pilot shot out, rocketed along

in his ejection seat, but ricocheted-off the hard steel hull of the carrier, leaving a notable mark in the gray paint, yet the parachute had still successfully deployed. The ever dependable ejection seat, took the hit on the hull, instead of the pilot's body, and still got enough altitude, that the chute deployed and inflated, so the lucky young pilot was only shaken-up, but for the most part he was okay. Chalk one up for *Martin Baker*, the ejection seat manufacturer. The rocket powered ejection seats are a vast improvement over the first ones, which used a dynamite charge to blow the seat and its' pilot out of the plane. Those crude early seats fractured a lot of backs. A helicopter had quickly flown over the pilot, and the rescue swimmer had jumped in the water to help the pilot into the rescue harness.

That night after the rescue, the helicopter was no longer on the ship. It had flown to Texas for repairs. Without a helo, if a pilot had gone in the drink in the dark, there was a good chance he wouldn't be found, till daylight, if then, and that region of the Gulf is filled with big toothy sharks, so treading water is not the most fun way to spend the night.

Helos aren't just used for failed landings, but sometimes, a plane has engine failure during takeoff.

The rescue swimmer (Search and Rescue Swimmer {SAR}) may need to get the pilot and navigator out of the plane, while they're still strapped-in. The swimmer has to perform this feat, before the plane sinks. If the crew hasn't ejected, the SAR swimmer has to get the plane's canopy open, and extract what may be an unconscious pilot and navigator from their seats. This has to be done quickly, since the plane is loaded with fuel and possibly heavy weapons, not made to float! Therefore, time is of the essence. Perhaps, if the rescue swimmer had a compact device, which consisted of a large tightly folded vacuum packed inflatable bag, which could be inflated by a three ounce pressurized CO2 bottle. The rescue swimmer could use something like a D-ring to first attach it to the plane, pull the activation lanyard, and the inflated device might prevent the plane from sinking, thereby giving the rescue swimmer the critical time to successfully extract the pilot, and/or navigator.

After the third A-7 had successfully landed, I was still on the LSO platform, tired and complacent, just barely aware of the LSOs commands to the fourth, and last, incoming plane. The first two planes had already refueled and were headed back to base. The

third was being refueled. The fourth A-7, flown by the infirm newbie (new guy), was on final, and less than an eighth of a mile out. He wanted to land last, hoping his nausea would clear-up. Not really paying attention, I was just standing on the aft port corner of the deck, watching the dark phosphorescent wake in the black water. I wasn't looking at the plane, because I didn't like looking at the bright landing light. The LSO was giving last second instructions to the sick pilot.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LTV_A-7_Corsair_II#mediaviewer/File:A-7E_Corsair_II.JPEG)

“You're a little low... let's bring it up, now. Add some power...” The LSO spoke into his mike to the last incoming pilot.

“That's better.” The LSO continued.

“Okay, let's kick it to the right, now, and bring up the nose slightly.” The LSO continued his calm instructing.

“Not left, bring it to your right! Right!” The new pilot was most likely fatigued, since it had been a

long round flight, and he was ill.

“Kick it to the right!” The LSO said this with a serious twang in his voice, yet I assumed all was fine.

“Wave off! Wave off! Move it!” The LSO shouted these last words.

The LSO’s final group of commands to the pilot were booming, but the very last few words, “Move it!” Were directed at me, but I didn’t really realize that, at first. But, those last few words snapped me out of my pleasant fog. Turning to my left, I looked behind myself for the LSO, but he wasn’t there.

What’s happening? Where’d he go! Quickly turning back around in the other direction, I saw the LSO’s body horizontal in the air, and headed over the edge of the carrier! *What the fuck?* For emergency purposes, there is a safety net stretched across a large rectangular metal frame just off the port side of the deck, but about six or seven feet, below the level of the deck.

If you’re down in the net and a plane impacts too hard, so the landing gear collapses, and the plane’s fuel tanks (in the wings) explode, at least you’re lower than the explosion, below all those flying pieces of shrapnel and the bellowing mantle of flame,

ergo hopefully safe; unless of course, you happened to get covered in unburned jet fuel. The net gives you a chance. Turning back to look for the jet, I saw that it was coming down much too fast, nose high, and it's belly about to land dead on top of me! The monstrous fighter bomber was less than one hundred feet away, and about to crush me like a bug, right into the hard unforgiving carrier deck! *Holy shit!*

Simultaneous with that thought, I spun and sprinted for all I was worth. Three quick steps and I was airborne, hurling myself over the side, aiming for a vacant spot in the net, right next to the LSO. While barely over the side, but still in the air, the heavy fighter slammed into the deck. The impact was so hard and violent, that the shockingly loud BANG, sounded like a cannon blast, and the shock wave of the impact vibrated the organs inside my chest and abdomen. *He's gonna explode!* Plowing into the net, I was certain that the plane was coming apart all over the deck, and about to explode. I could feel the hot exhaust of the plane wash just above us, and we were instantly soaked in raw jet fuel. Evidently, the pilot had shoved the throttle forward, so the afterburner had come-on, with the corresponding huge bright blue flame issuing forth. Some of the unburned fuel

soaked us. Fearfully, I assumed that the two of us were about to be barbecued, and to end-up looking like a pair of burned blackened flies, hanging in the spider web of the safety net.

Panicking, I started to climb for the top edge of the net, so I could jump into the black water far below, if I found that I had become a human torch. Better to be in the water with the sharks, than burn to death like a human torch. At the edge of the net, I stared down, and waited a couple long seconds to see if I ignited; but fortunately, we didn't catch on fire. For some odd reason, I briefly flashed on the trap-house, so many years before, when I'd dove through the kitchen window of the little shotgun shack. In both cases, I'd had to leap for my life, and had been terrified.

The LSO pointed, and to my amazement, the plane with its' sick pilot was still flying, slowly turning to its left, with its big blue flame lighting the gulf waters below. The plane seemed undamaged. The A-7 Corsair was evidently built like a tank, so it merely boltered and had climbed back into the starlit night sky. The plane seemed to be moving far too slow to be airborne, but perchance that was owing to some adrenaline-induced time distortion.

“You okay, LSO?” I asked.

“Me? Yeah, I’m fine, civi (a civilian), but I’m not the one who wasn’t paying attention. You almost got fucking obliterated!” He sarcastically answered, shaking his head.

“You’re so fucking right, LSO! I wasn’t paying attention, thanks for shouting that order to move, man. But what about the pilot?”

“Poor guy’s probably got some nasty gut bug, but I’ll bet he’s not thinking about his nausea, right now. I’d hate to be the guy, who’s got to clean-out the cockpit. I need to get back up there and talk him in.” The LSO calmly proclaimed.

We climbed back up on the deck, as the sick pilot once again circled around counter clockwise, and lined-up behind the carrier. The LSO had put his head gear back on, and had calmly talked the sick pilot in, as if nothing had happened. The ill pilot landed successfully on his second try, but it was a harry number one wire landing. That time, I wasn’t the slightest bit sleepy and easily managed to pay close attention.

And yes, we were foolishly still covered in jet fuel when the plane, made its successful landing. The

LSO and I were facing toward the stern, when the jet passed, its wing tip only thirty feet away. I was experiencing a certain profound mental clarity, when I went to the showers to scrub-off the smelly greasy jet fuel, and to catch some shut eye, but none came that night. I've had a lot of car crashes, around forty because of my youthful years, but I can barely remember them, still I can still hear the BANG, made by the A-7 slamming into the carrier deck that night, as well as the LSO's last second warning to me, "Move it!"



JUMPING THE WHIRLWIND

“I can be on guard against my enemies, but God deliver me from my friends!”

Charlotte Bronte

One lackluster Saturday afternoon, I was driving through the beautiful Alabama countryside, with my four year old daughter, looking at such exciting things as: cows, farmhouses, fences, dogs, chickens,

buzzards, ponds, cotton fields, big trees, etc. It's so easy to entertain a small child, and such a genuine pleasure.

"There's a cow, Daddy!"

"Yes, I see it! Wow! How many legs does it have?"

"Four!"

"Are you sure?" *God, I love her!*

"Yessss, four!" She proudly stated, as if I were an utter idiot.

"Let me count them to make sure... one, two, three, four. Oh, my God, you're right! It does have four legs! I never counted them, before. I was thinking it only had three."

"Look daddy, there's a horse with those cows!"

"The farmer put that horse in with them, because it thinks it's a cow, sweetie. It happens all the time. Those kind of strange horse-cows can occasionally even, 'mooooo,' like a cow, but they can't grow horns, and you can't ride them or milk them."

"Are you lying, daddy?" She asked with a frown on her small smooth wrinkle-free face.

“You can always tell when I’m lying. You’re way too smart for me, girly. Let me know when you see another cow, please. You want to take one home? We could let the cow have the living room, but you’d have to take care of it... lots of hay, and water, and you’d have to clean-up all the smelly cow poop and pee.”

“Okay, daddy!” *Okay?*

“You’ll have to come-up with a name for it, take it outside, so it can go on long walks, and meet all the neighbors. You do know, that cows are extremely popular?”

“I undertand, Daddy.”

“You’ll have to put a bell around its’ neck, so you can find it if it gets lost.”

“Okay, daddy. I will”

“What do we do, if the farmer won’t sell us the cow?”

“Give him more money, daddy.”

“The cow is so big, we’ll have to cut a hole in the car roof to fit it into the backseat.”

“How?”

“Maybe the farmer has a big can opener, or we could use an ax.”

“We’re not really getting a cow, are we daddy?”

“Not, today... But, you never know. One day, you may marry a farmer, and you’ll have to get-up early every morning to milk all the cows. The cows get mad if they don’t get milked. Would you like to marry a farmer?”

“I like cows, a lot, but I don’t want to marry anybody.”

“Smart girl. Relationships are usually just trouble.”

To this day, my daughter still loves cows. My guess is that it’s something about the cow’s peaceful nature that appeals to her. Suddenly, our engaging conversation was interrupted by a radio advertisement, talking about skydiving. The radio ad instructed the listener to call a toll free number, if they wanted to experience a skydiving jump. *Now, that’s a sure fire way to add a little excitement to this day!* Per the ad, I grabbed my cellphone, and called. The drop-zone manager gave me directions to the *Blue Gulf Drop-zone*, in Berton, Alabama, about a thirty minute drive. It was located at a grass field

airport, called *G. Jim Field*. The private airfield was owned, and regularly mowed, by a retired reserve Admiral. The DZ was simply two small buildings, a huge silvery fuel tank, a plane, a couple of red windsocks, two picnic tables, a couple of palm trees, and the grassy landing-strip.

For my first jump, I was flown up to an altitude of two miles, in a small single engine *Cessna*. The plane looked fairly beat-up, and had been spray painted black. The female drop-zone manager agreed to watch my daughter, while I made the jump. A couple of years later, the same small plane would crash, right after take-off, yet miraculously, everyone would walk away with only minor injuries, since it had only gotten about one hundred feet of altitude, and everyone was buckled in and braced for the impact; better yet, it hit in a recently plowed field. For some unknown reason, the engine had unexpectedly choked-out. Fortunately, I wasn't there that day.

That first day, my professional tandem master was a true wild man, Mick Rain; the living reputation of the old phrase, sex, drugs, and rock-n-roll. Indeed he loved drugs, alcohol, rock, and women. While he dated various women, one was a bit unusual. She

was a little black girl with an extremely high IQ, who worked as a profiler for the *Behavioral Science Unit* of the *FBI*. This always seemed a bit odd to me, considering Mick's outspoken love of drugs... different strokes. She made around a hundred jumps, but she was always strapped to one of the tandem masters, and used to orgasm while falling through the sky. After each jump, she'd lay in the grass field, recovering from her 'skygasm,' as she used to call them. She always orgasmed on the way down. Needless to say, she was different, but that's probably allowed her to be a profiler. I always wondered, that since she could so easily get into the mind of murderers, and she could orgasm, because of pending death, could she herself get off on killing?

The day of my first jump, I was strapped to the front of Mick, when we bailed-out, at just over two miles up. When two people are tethered together, and jump under one chute, it is known as a 'tandem jump.' By law, the beginning skydiver has to do three tandem jumps, before jumping with their individual parachute; but even then, the beginner has to complete six more jumps, where an instructor flies next to them in the air, giving them hand signals, before they jump solo. The tenth jump is free and

done alone. After the tenth jump, each jump only cost twenty bucks. The ten jump course cost about \$1100, back then.

In some respects, Mick was the polar opposite of the decorated Admiral, who owned the field, and in other respects they were very much alike. The Admiral was a highly intelligent, good, honest, brave, hard working, right wing conservative. Mick was also highly intelligent, good, honest, brave, hard working, but he was also a lazy, drug using, nonpolitical hippie. The admiral and Mick actually got along better than I would have anticipated. Mick had done thousands of tandem jumps. He was your typical long-haired radical, who viewed doing drugs, much as a devout Muslim does prayer. In all the years that I've known him, I don't think he ever made a jump with shoes on, even in the sub-zero winter. That was one thing I never fully enjoyed... skydiving in the cold wintertime. Falling through the freezing air, chills the jumper to the bone, no matter how many clothes are worn. Every time I did it, I vowed I'd never do it again, but jumping is an addiction.

Mick's toes had been repeatedly broken from bad high speed less than ideal landings, hence they pointed in various inappropriate directions. One

never could be certain of a smooth landing. His lower left leg had been shattered, during a windy base jump, where he was blown back into the rocky cliff face. He was in the hospital in France for two months, and made a full recovery. After two surgeries and rehab, his total bill was twenty-two dollars, but that was for his food bill. The surgery, the medicine, and the care were all free. According to the *World Health Organization's* 2000 report, France leads the world in quality of medical care. The United States is 37th from the top, but our medicine is by far the most costly in the entire world. No other country's medical care cost nearly as much as the United States'.

http://www.who.int/whr/2000/en/whr00_en.pdf

That first day, as the plane was slowly climbing to jump-altitude, circling around higher and higher, above the clouds, occasionally it would be flying directly into the brilliant sun. At those times, when the brilliant sunlight blindingly flooded through the pilot's windscreen, I noticed that Mick, my aforementioned tandem master, the guy who I was

going to be strapped to and jumping out of the plane with, would be staring straight into the extremely bright sun, yet even so, his pupils were severely dilated! His light blue irises were just thin blue rims. Worse yet, looking into the sun didn't seem to bother him in the slightest, whereas the pilot had on the world's darkest sunglasses and still had to look away from the sun. Mick wore a serene expression, with a whimsical little smile. He looked, like a cross between Buddha and Disney's Cheshire Cat, and was plainly higher than the plane.

Narcotics like codeine, morphine, heroin, percocet, dilaudid, oxycontin, etc., usually cause the user to have small pin-point black pupils. But, drugs like: meth, cocaine, dexedrine, benzedrine, adderall, LSD, mescaline, etc., generally dilate the pupils. So, I realized that most likely my tandem master's brain was moving at light speed on one of the drugs in the latter group. *Just fucking great! He's stoned on his ass! I'm gonna die!* But then, I figured that light speed was better than too slow. Still, I had hoped that he might be functioning under a more natural form of neurochemistry. Years later, I'd tell him about my first jump with him, mentioning his pupil dilation.

“That first jump I made, you were my tandem

master, and when you'd look directly at the sun your pupils were totally blown. What the hell were you on man?"

"Shit man! I can't remember. I've taken so much crap... but I probably was on something... likely it was acid, back then. We evidently made a good jump, and the chute worked fine. Right? We're still here, aren't we? Jumping on acid is a beautiful thing, man! You should do it sometime, Joey." Mick suggested.

Once we were at altitude, panic was trying to edge its way past my meager effort to remain calm. *I'm about to jump out of a plane, two miles up, tethered to a guy whose brain is fried on some drug!* Then it dawned on me that Mick had literally made thousands of jumps, and the odds were very good that it wasn't his first time being high, not the way he looked. *He must know what he's doing. Besides, if I die, so does he.* Before exiting the little black plane, I remembered having talked with any number of Navy pilots, who flew in WWII and Vietnam, and had done hundreds of hair-raising combat missions and carrier landings, while high on booze. Many had flown those missions in various adverse circumstances; some were done at night, some in storms, some while

wounded, some while flying a busted plane, but for many, the missions were flown shit-faced. I also recalled that as a twelve year old child, I shot better with two bourbons on board.

Many years before, when I sold drugs in Mobile, I knew a phantom (the F-4 supersonic jet) pilot, who loved to drop acid about one hour, before takeoff, so that he'd be tripping in the air. He claimed that there was nothing better than kicking in the F-4's afterburners, while tripping, and then fly straight-up, until the air got too thin. The squadron considered him to be the best pilot. LSD was not on the drug screen for the military; at least, not in those days. Moreover, I raced cars better, with a couple of shots of bourbon on board. *Most likely, Mick knows what he's doing. I sure as hell hope so!* Those memories helped to take the edge off my fear, concerning the mental status of my tandem master. When the door to the *Cessna* flew open, I was looking two miles, straight down at the DZ (drop-zone).

“Let’s get the fuck outta this cramped little plane, and hit the fuck’n air. Don’t worry, I won’t let the planet hit you too hard.” Stoned Mick enthusiastically suggested. *Skydiving... man vs. gravity!*

Oh shit! Directly below us, I could barely make-out my young daughter gazing up at the plane. She was smaller than a grain of sand. As I exited the door, I thought, *if this chute doesn't open, I might crash-down right on top of her!* But as it turned-out, the jump was better than I ever expected. Once out the door, we did a couple of back flips, then fell face first, straight down, for about a minute, then as the chute violently jerked opened, one of the leg straps was slightly loose, so I lost some skin on the inside of my right thigh; still, the experience was thrilling, and I knew I was hooked. *I've got to do this again.*

Mick allowed me to steer the parachute for a couple of minutes, and I was amazed at the maneuverability of the huge red and black tandem chute. It could execute a 360 degree turn in about three seconds. Later, I would discover that my smaller personal chute could execute the same turn in about one-fourth that time. The modern ram-air parachutes are extremely safe, and agile. I can't imagine jumping with one of those antiquated round parachutes, like most of the military still uses. Round parachutes are extremely difficult to steer, slow, and dangerous contraptions, nor are they as dependable about opening, but they're cheaper to manufacture!

There's probably millions of them in military storage, still waiting to be used. You can't make them flare just before landing, so you almost always hit too hard; hence, more: deaths, broken backs and legs, as well as sprained ankles and knees. People at the DZ have tried to give those rounds chutes away, but nobody wants one, not even for free. In my limited opinion, they're only good for making a tent in the backyard.

My first tandem master, Mick, was one of the original American BASE jumpers; BASE being an acronym for Buildings, Antennas, Spans (bridges), and Earth (cliffs). Base jumping is done with regular rectangular-shaped zero-p (zero permeability) ram-air parachutes, as well as with the popular birdsuits. Mick is a true wild man and under all his natural-born and drug-induced craziness, a good and kind hearted soul, and he's a major party animal, but unfortunately when he's drunk, Mick can be more than slightly obnoxious. Only alcohol makes him like that. On weed, or on anything other drug, he's a cordial soul. Only alcohol turns him into an ass.

http://www.who.int/whr/2000/en/whr00_en.pdf

Many people believe that it was Faust Vrancic (Verancic), who made and jumped the first parachute. The guy was over sixty-five years old, when in 1617, he jumped off of St. Mark's Campanile in Venice. John Wilkins wrote about him and his famous jump, in *Mathematical Magick or the Wonders that may be Performed by Mechanical Geometry* (1648).

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fausto_Veranzio

Mick has now completed just over 13,000 jumps, and works as a tandem master, somewhere out west. He's had a boatload of death-defying close calls. I only have just over 429 jumps, but have had a few scary close-calls; a couple are chronicled, herein. Jumping in the birdsuit was a profound surprise, and I was astounded at its flight efficiency. It literally provided me with the feeling I was flying! I felt like a little kid, leaping off the front porch and pretending that I was Superman, only I could actually fly... fan-fucking-tastic!

After the first tandem jump, I signed up for the skydiving course of nine jumps, graduated, and

became the occasional weekend jumper for about the next twelve years. During the skydiving phase of my life, Mick saved my life twice. The first time, I was about to jump, without my chest strap being fastened, and the second time, my pilot chute had come unpacked. The pilot chute is a tiny chute {about 28 inches in diameter}, which the skydiver throws-out. Once out into the air, it then inflates and pulls-out the main chute. Ripcords were something was used with those antiquated round chutes. The more modern pilot chute is deployed by grabbing a small (two inches in diameter) leather ball, which hangs from the bottom of the jumper's rig. The skydiver throws it out to his side. Evidently, that ball on the bottom of my rig had snagged on something inside the aircraft, and that had pulled out the pilot chute, while I was still inside the plane. It had trailed-out behind me inside the plane, and I wasn't aware of it, and headed to the door. Both times, the ever alert, often stoned, Mick had stopped me, before I'd gotten to the exit door of the plane. During those two circumstances, I certainly would have died, if not worse, and there is certainly a worse scenario, than me dying.

If the jumper bails-out, without the chest strap

being fastened, when the chute jerks opens, he or she will forcefully be tossed forward, right out of their parachute harness, and then be free-falling (free of a chute) through the sky, and without hope. And, if the skydiver gets near the exit door with his or her pilot chute already out, the scenario can be worse, than their death. The powerful winds, created by the plane speeding through the air, will suck the small pilot chute out the door, which will then instantly inflate it, pulling-out and inflating the main parachute, right down the outside of the speeding plane. As a result, the jumper and the chute are dragged straight back and into the horizontal portion of the plane's tail; then, when the chute snags the tail and the jumper's body sails past the tail, and he or she suddenly hits the end of the parachute lines. The fierce jolt, created by the person's body weight, generally snaps-off the plane's tail section, or a large portion there of, ergo the plane goes into a violent uncontrollable spin.

If conscious and not too badly tangled in the parachute lines, possibly the skydiver can cut away what remains of the snagged and tangled chute, then fall away, and a bit later he or she can deploy their reserve chute. There's a bean-bag like structure on

the right shoulder-strap of the rig, which if you pull, allows you to separate yourself from your main chute. Unfortunately, the remaining passengers, inside the now tail-less uncontrollable plane, will be penned to the walls, by the spin, and have to fight their way out of the aircraft. Because of the centrifugal force of the brutal spin, it will be extremely difficult to get to the exit door.

It may not sound like it would be too tough to get out of a spinning plane, but just ask the very few, who have successfully managed to do so, about how easy it was. I'm sure they'll be more than happy to bleed their unique experience all over you. The g-forces in a spinning plane, in most cases, are nearly insurmountable, nailing the victims to the inner walls of the plane, making escape almost impossible.

While I've never experienced, nor seen, such a disaster, I've read a few accounts, written by the few survivors. Once a month, *The United States Parachute Association* puts out a magazine, which often contains various harrowing stories, and list all the jumpers, who've died jumping that month. If you're a registered skydiver, every month you receive that magazine, complete with the monthly skydiving obituaries. Often the magazines chronicles some of

the deaths in great detail, in hopes that the reader won't make the same mistake the dead guys made.

Pleasure and action make the hours seem short.
William Shakespeare

As a result of skydiving being a bit of high risk sport, there is a tremendous amount of trust and camaraderie, between the skydivers. Where I jumped, most of the regular jumpers were great guys, and it was a true honor to know and jump with them. Many insurance companies, if not most of them, will not insure a skydiver for medical or life insurance. Those skydivers I've known, who have been injured when jumping, and that's quite a few, usually told the hospital, that they fell off a ladder, while working on their house.

“Well, I was on the ladder, cleaning out the rain gutters, and I reached too far, so the ladder just slipped, and I hit the ground real hard!” So might claim, the victim of a bad skydiving landing.

Skydivers usually check each-other's rig, while riding-up in the plane to jump altitude. I'm certainly glad that Mick had checked my rig, before I got near

the door. In each of those two cases (the unbuckled chest strap and the pulled-out pilot chute), I would have probably died, but in the latter case, there was a good chance that I would also have killed the pilot, as well as the other jumpers, who would have been left trapped in the plane. So, I shall always be indebted to that wild hippie.

While skydiving can be dangerous, it is mostly tremendously fun. My greatest regret about skydiving is that I didn't start younger. My landings were often legendarily bad. It took me a long time to finally master the art of landing smoothly, and even then, there's no guarantee about the finicky wind.

Sometimes I'd flare the canopy too soon, and at other times, too late. Since I probably have questionable depth perception, minor cataracts, as well as pits in the lenses inside eyes from several attacks of iritis, it is a bit difficult for me to judge my closure rates; hence, my bad landings and my crummy relative work. Relative work is where you link up with other jumpers and periodically change positions, and after about ten thousand feet of falling, everyone separates apart, so they don't get tangled, when they deploy their chutes.

Skydiving is a truly beautiful experience. If I

spent the whole day at the drop-zone, it only seemed like an hour. Another odd thing about jumping is that, when you're falling, the air going by your ears and head is extremely loud, but even so, your brain shuts off the sound, and everything goes silent; at least, it was like that for me. Skydiving produces a permanent change in one's psyche, nothing profound, but none the less, it's permanent. For some reason, if the skydiver doesn't get to jump, after a few days, he or she will start dreaming that they're jumping. Every skydiver I've known has stated that dreaming thing is true. Often these dreams are that he or she can jump without a chute, and still land safely; in effect, the skydiver can often fly in their dreams. In my dreams, I jump off of extremely tall mountains and out of planes. In the dream, when I realize I don't have a chute, I just fly. Also, if a skydiver goes to a movie, and in the film there are some high altitude shots, as might be shot from a helicopter or plane flying over a city, mountain, or canyon, the skydiver will likely get a vicarious high, as if they're jumping. This situation is an immense feeling of freedom, spiced-up with a little squirt of adrenaline. Those pleasant dreams and vicarious feelings have happened to me, as well as most jumpers, I've discussed this with.

Perhaps the most magnificent natural site, which I've been lucky enough to feast my eyes upon, excluding certain women and many of my enthralling hallucinations, occurred when I was perched in the doorway of a medium sized jump plane, called a 'Caravan,' waiting for the green light to bailout. There were four of us, about thirty-seconds from our jump point, positioned in the open five foot wide jump door of that turbo-powered aircraft. We were slightly above 14,000 feet, and while the plane was proceeding north, we jumpers were facing west, toward the magnificent setting sun. The bottom edge of the sun was perfectly balanced on the earth's western horizon, which from our altitude appeared to be somewhere in southern Mississippi. It wasn't so much the rich color of the sun, which had transfixed our attention, albeit the sun shone-forth as an uncommonly deep purplish red. Nor was it the fact that we could look directly at the sun, without any discomfort. The deep crimson color, as well as being able to look directly at it, were interesting details, and most likely owing to the fact that the air of Mobile was extremely polluted that day. However, those things were not why the sun was such an absolutely spellbinding sight.

In Mobile, there are companies which are such dreadful polluters, that for public health reasons, they are not allowed to set-up shop in their parent countries. A few of those companies may have been banned in other European countries, yet they're able to operate in Mobile, most likely by greasing the palms of certain good ole boys. High paid attorneys make all the arrangements, so the felonious, often death-dealing (cancer causing) transactions are sadly deemed to be perfectly legal. What's thousands of sick and prematurely dead folks compared to the corporate officers and the good ole boys, making big money? Right? There are better ways to reduce the human population, i.e., an infertility vaccine.

<https://patents.google.com/patent/US20080187549A1/en>

The surrounding sky was filled with brilliant shiny golden and tangerine clouds, as well as random cloudless regions, resembling inverted turquoise lakes. But as remarkable as those sights were, they were not the most striking factor contained in that beautiful sunset. The phenomenally riveting element was something totally unexpected, something I'd

never seen before or sense; it was an aspect of the sun itself. Shockingly, the four of us could see that it was actually a three dimensional orb, a ball, a crimson spheroid. It was not just its usual blinding two dimensional circular disc. The purplish red sun was magnificently displayed in all three dimensions. Furthermore, we could actually see flowing waves traveling along its surface, and since it downward movement! The sun looked like an ocean made of hot moving fiery bloody waves! *Maybe that's where the sinners burn, forever. Or maybe, that's where some control freak got the idea of hell.* The dreamlike sight was so staggering, that it momentarily paralyzed the four of us. None of us were high, except in reference to altitude. We just kept staring at the majestic spherical wave-covered ruby ball, and no one jumped, ergo we flew past our appointed jump point. The plane had to circle back over the drop-zone, so that we could make our last jump for the day; as a result, we ended-up landing in the dusk.

Conversely, the most bizarre jump, I ever experienced, began one bright summer afternoon, while I was sitting at an old wooden picnic table, just outside the DZ's packing shack, a small dilapidated cinder block building where skydivers packed their

chutes, on clean but well worn carpeting. The peculiarity of this jump was owing to two factors: the unexpectedly fast changing weather, and a new friend with a rather unusual personality. When the extraordinary event began, the sky was a beautiful light blue and cloudless, except several miles off to the West, I could see a monstrous black boiling front, which as it turned out was swiftly approaching our drop-zone, replete with an abundance of rather impressive lightning bolts, and the corresponding, almost continuous, rolling thunder. It was the kind of outlandish weather, that I've seen only three times in my life, and it was making me think that I needed to load-up my gear, and head home, before the dangerous tempest arrived.

But right then, one of the longtime skydivers, Tim Hillburn, walked over to the novice pilot, Rick Peel, who was flying the jump plane that day. Rick was standing next to me, and nervously eyeballing at the ominous black churning front, coming our way. Tim was also a pilot, but considered by many to be the pilot's pilot, an aviator extraordinaire, a god-like pilot, with many thousands of hours of flight experience. In fact, Tim owned his own stunt plane and instructed highly experienced pilots in the art of

stunt flying. His thought processes were amazingly fast, a truly brilliant guy, and in the world of aviation, he was indeed the local aviation deity, but one with a few interesting tweaks; still, those tweaks never bothered me. Tim loved to treat the people at the nearby beaches to a one-man flying displays, where he'd demonstrate his mad aviation skills in his agile little stunt plane. People on the beach would watch the free show, and Tim was nothing, if not a showman.

He also managed to successfully bed more women than any man I've ever known, except for perhaps Tommy the gigolo at the aforementioned, *Rob Paul's Plaza Health Club*. Women could sense Tim was a man with serious game. But unlike the gigolo, Tim's women were young and beautiful, and none of Tim's women ever appeared to have any complaints. In fact, Tim's conquests often pursued him, long after he had moved on to another new lady. Tim was always good to the women, but his taste required extensive variety, rather than the usual boring commitment. His only problems were his never-ending show-off ego, his occasional bouts of mania, and the fact that he could never admit being wrong or to making a mistake, so by default, he had a little

trouble pulling-off a sincere apology, though he never owed me one. It was always interesting to watch Tim justify an error: avoiding the issue, or rationalizing it, or just claiming that he wasn't wrong, when his relatively unimportant mistake was plainly obvious. What in Tim's makeup made it virtually impossible for him to admit when he was wrong, even when it is obvious he was? And why did that happen repetitively? Generally, people with fragile egos do this, but Tim was an amazingly gifted man, in so many ways.

Since everyone makes mistakes, it never ceased to amaze me how such an accomplished and gifted man as Tim couldn't seem to get over making a simple innocuous error; and even though, he'd made it without malice, he simply couldn't admit to it. In addition to being extremely bright and meticulous, and that compared to most folks, he made very few errors, he absolutely couldn't admit to any. It was as if Tim had to think of himself as being perfect... beyond the realm of erratum. I never understood this about him; conceivably, he'd once made a bad call, which resulted in some dire consequences, and he never forgave himself for it; and so after that, to admit any mistake, even an inconsequential one, was

like admitting to having made that serious mistake, whatever it may have been. But honestly, I never understood this aspect of his personality. Maybe the reason he was like that was that he couldn't understand why he'd been abandoned in childhood, and perhaps he'd been wrongly told that it was his fault, even though he was only a little child at the time, but that really doesn't make good sense, but such things rarely do.

The most august creatures have unusual elemental arrangements.

Liam Y. Moore

That afternoon at the drop-zone, Tim was about to make an unforgettably bad call, the results of which would be frightening, yet also truly exhilarating. The mistake may have come close to killing four people, with Tim himself being one of the four. Nevertheless, I thank him for that one-of-a-kind adventure. Such experiences make you realize that a life of quiet desperation may not be worth the living. Still, the perceived value of each life is assessed by each individual's three pounds of gray mush.

A friend, who tests your abilities, is probably not so much interested in your potential, as he is in his own. The tests (questions and deeds) are designed to verify his own greatness. And so, you may at times feel obligated to convincingly fail those tests. If it cost nothing, give our friend what he wants, for clearly are incurable things. Their ‘friendship’ might be worth the minor insult. It’s better to be underestimated.

The Joy of Manic Dreams by Dr. Mayor W. E. Illim

As mentioned, Rick was the drop-zone’s novice jump-pilot, and on the opposite end of the piloting-skill spectrum, from the aeronautically gifted Tim. So, whenever Tim spoke, Rick reverently listened, as a young novice monk might worship at the feet of the Dalai Lama. But as I was about to discover, even the best of us, even the Dali Lama of aviation, occasionally makes a blunder. Lots of my sins, mistakes, and bad calls are contained, in these books, but there have been so many others, which I’ve omitted out of shame; even so, I just keep plugging along. I can only wish that I was as careful and

accurate as Tim.

Time passes unhindered. When we make mistakes, we cannot turn the clock back and try again. All we can do is use the present well.

Dalai lama XIV

Many times, I've known Tim to stretch the truth, about like an extra small g-string on Aretha Franklin, but generally he'd do that only for amusement's sake and a little harmless self aggrandizement, never to perpetuate evil. But then, Tim is certainly smart enough not to let you know if he'd done something truly wrong. Tim was the never-ending consummate showman. I've been guilty of such, myself; though not nearly as often, or as skillfully as Tim. Perhaps, he does this to avoid boredom.

The day of the previously mentioned approaching storm, Tim desperately wanted to get-in one last jump, before the foreboding Stygian front closed-in on our drop-zone. So, the highly skilled aviator erroneously decided to convince Rick, the nervous novice pilot, to take us up just one more

time, even with the turbulent black front fast closing in from the West. In addition to being a great pilot, Tim was a world class salesman, and could probably persuade God and Satan to switch roles. That day at the drop-zone, Tim was about to unloose those salesman skills upon the novice aviator, and in so doing evoke an unforgettable event.

“You know Rick, that old front over there is still a long way off. I know it looks like it coming here soon, but believe you me, it’s hours away, and it’s probably not as bad as it looks. I’ve seen weather like this before, and we’ve got plenty of time to get up to altitude and back down, before that ugly front gets close to us, but you probably know that. I’ve been watching the weather for years. I’m sure I can get a couple of more people to go along, to make the load profitable for the drop-zone, and you’ll get in a little extra flight time, and be paid for one more jump-run. It’s a win-win for everyone, Rick. Come-on man...You wanta fly one more jump run. Don’t you? You’re not going to let that little bit of distant weather frighten you... are you, Rick? I’ll help you tie-down the plane, as soon as we get back down.” Tim successfully pressured and reassured the ambivalent neophyte.

Nevertheless, Rick’s brittle wide-eyed glance

toward the foreboding west, made it obvious that he was still anxious about that dark lightning-laden front, roiling its way across Alabama's southern pinewood landscape. The storm sounded like distant artillery blasts and looked like some special effects, out of a Hollywood film. On-the-other-hand, Rick was also afraid of looking like a nervous Nellie in front of such an auspicious pilot, as the great Tim Hillburn, and the last thing a pilot ever wants is to be branded as being less than brave.

Stunt pilot, Tim was light years beyond a type A personality. He made other type A folk, look like they were type Zs. The supreme pilot often did more in one day, than most people did in a year. In addition to having been an Air Force jet jock, Tim had been a salesman, selling harvesting machinery to large farms, and so he had no problem selling the fledgling nervous Rick on flying us to altitude for one more mystically terrifying jump, that day; it was one, I'll never forget. Rick the novice pilot begrudgingly gave in and agreed to fire-up the junky black Cessna.

"I guess I could... sure thing, Tim. You really think that we have time to get to jump altitude and back down before that big black nasty look'n mess gets here?" Rick the novice reluctantly asked.

“Oh yeah... no problem Rick... plenty of time! We’ve got time to spare... no sweat, man.” Tim said this as he dismissively waved-off the approaching black peril, as one might casually wave-off a nuisance gnat.

The locally famous Tim Hillburn then turned to me. Second guessing what he was about to say, I’d already stowed my fears about the approaching weather, and readied my response. Even though I’d never spoken with him before, I’d heard all about his well deserved reputation. Like Rick, the novice pilot, I was then a novice jumper, and so I too believed Tim, that we had time to get in the jump.

“How about you? What do you say, Joey? You up for one last jump?” He asked me. *He knows my name.*

“Sure, Tim... I’ll go get my rig on. Be right back.” I foolishly responded. *God, I hope Tim’s right about that awful storm!*

Getting-up from the picnic table, I headed into the parachute-packing shack to put on my: jumpsuit, leather frap-hat, googles, wrist mounted altimeter, and my faithful old rig. Like Rick, I mistakenly had faith in the great Tim Hillburn, simply because of his

renown aeronautical reputation, and the few times I'd seen him. At that time, I erroneously thought he could do no wrong, especially when it came to anything about flying, and so this was to be the first serious mistake I'd see him make, but as I mentioned, he was rarely wrong. Though I'd never spoken with him before, I'd watched him interact with various people at the drop zone, as well, I'd witnessed his high speed, low altitude stunt flying enough to know two things: first, his human interaction seemed polite and concerned, but it was slightly stilted like a salesman working a mark, and two, he was gifted at confidently, perhaps excessively so, making lightning fast technical decisions.

While looking at the approaching churning turbulence, my intuition was screaming to ignore Tim, and to get in my car and leave; and so, Tim's mistake was also mine. One thing for sure, Tim was smart as a whip, and one of the most complex persons I've had the pleasure of knowing, and even with his rare mistakes, I admire him greatly, yet because of his manic-like energy, he is hard to deal with for more than an hour or two. He's simply too intense, and suffers from a bit of bipolar disorder, a sprinkle of obsessive compulsion disorder, with more

than just a few fragments of adrenaline filled *PTSD* stirred-into the mercurial stew.

Having put on my old rig, which I'd purchased from the family of a man, who had died while skydiving, I headed out to get in the airplane. A rig is basically a canvas container with three parachutes inside: a full sized main chute, a full sized reserve chute, as well as the aforementioned tiny drogue or pilot chute, which is used to help pull out the main chute. I never wanted to buy a new rig, since you never know how well it might work; whereas, a well used rig, has a dependable performance history. Several times, I've seen beginning jumpers buy a new rig, but be afraid to jump it, since it had no history. If it had been put together wrong, the result might have been disastrous.

Tim Hillburn had put on his first rate gear, and had hurriedly recruited yet one more jumper, a Kathy Murdock. Like me, she was a beginner. In fact, she was even more of a greenhorn, than I was. Why she skydived was a mystery, since I'd frequently see her gobbling-down a few valium well before she boarded the jump-plane, no doubt to calm her nerves. Oddly enough, she'd brazenly consume the pills sitting in plain view at the picnic tables, right in

front of everyone. Of course, skydivers generally don't care about such things. The last thing a skydiver wants to do is hassle another jumper. Kathy just didn't seem to care, who knew about her pill popping.

Perchance, if skydiving seems that scary, you shouldn't be doing it. If she'd had an emergency in the air, she may not have survived, since the drug might have slowed her thought processes and reaction time. On the other hand, with the corresponding reduction in fear, provided by the drug, she may have functioned better. Maybe she just wanted to appear to be brave, or fancied impressing her parents and friends, but sometimes the harder you try to impress, the more obvious you become. I've seen highly intelligent people, which she is, fall prey to this phenomenon. It might also be that she liked the idea of skydiving, but just needed a bit more courage, so taking the pills was no big deal; that is provided she didn't get addicted.

She is a person of boundless goodwill. Such people often overestimate the importance of parental or peer approval, and so they are apt to jump through too many hoops, and even out the door of a perfectly good plane to gain such questionable approval. Of all

the bad landings I've witnessed, her's were clearly the worst; even worse than mine, and as mentioned, quite a number of my landings were legendarily bad, but Kathy's were unquestionably death defying!

Quickly, we three jumpers climbed into the small ancient beat-up black *Cessna*, and the nervous novice aviator, Rick scrambled in the worn and frayed pilot's seat, with its ripped seats, showing plenty of rusty wire frame, and pieces of torn foam. The plane should probably have been in the junkyard. There was the only the one pilot seat in the plane, since jump planes routinely have the seats removed, so more jumpers can be packed in. Everyone but the pilot simply sits on the metal floor. Accordingly, the seatbelts are bolted to the cabin floor. Larger jump planes have long plywood boxes, bolted to the floor, for jumpers to sit on.

Besides, skydivers wearing all their bulky gear would quickly destroy expensive seat coverings. In addition, in the little Cessna had the the co-pilot seat been in, it would have blocked the exit door. As a rule, skydiving planes are notoriously beat up, and stripped-down... no interior lighting, little if any paneling, and no heaters or air conditioners, etc. In many jump planes, there are a bunch of decals glued

around the inside, and maybe a poster or two glued or taped to the interior bulkhead. More than once, I've seen duct-tape used to make interior and exterior repairs.

I recall, that at another later time, we were going to be jumping out of a taildragger (three wheeled plane), called a 'Porter.' The porter was the type on plane which landed going uphill on the side of a mountain, in the old movie, 'Air America.' That wasn't exactly a smooth landing (see link below).

<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x54slcv>

The pilot gave the plane full throttle, and we started down the green landing strip of the DZ. The old aircraft was still building-up speed for take-off, probably only doing about fifty miles per hour, when its rear wheel dropped down into a bucket-sized hole in the field. Later, when we filled it in with a shovel, it appeared to be a gopher hole. The small wheel was torn clean off the plane, ergo the piloted chopped the power and plane spun-out and stopped, luckily without even a wingtip touching the ground. This caused us all to laugh, still we were afraid that the

loss of the tail wheel meant that we were done jumping that day, so we got creative.

One of the onboard jumpers, a Green Beret, came-up with the following idea. Old used car tires were laid along both sides of the runway. We found and used a common hand-saw, to cut an old car tire in half. Half the then C-shaped tire, we cupped around the tip of the plane's tail-end, which we wrapped in place, with lots of duct-tape. The half car tire, cupped around the tip of the plane's tail, acted in place of the missing wheel, and only took about twenty minutes to cut and install. On take-off and landing, the section of tire would just drag on the grass. Every-now-and-then that day, we'd simply wrap-on more duct tape, to replace the tape which had worn away. The jury-rigged piece of car tire worked fine.

Where there's a will, there's duct tape.

Make Do by William Moe Ray

On the day of the approaching black storm, three out of the four people on board the plane that fateful storm day were beginners: Kathy {the valium

connoisseur}, Rick {the novice pilot}, and myself (a novice jumper). Things were about to get remarkably hairy. Only the supreme pilot, Tim had significant experience, and he had it by the dump-truck load. By the time, we were all onboard, and the nervous Rick had the small plane taxiing across the grassy field, the foreboding churning black wall was coming on faster, than I'd expected; still, I trusted in Tim's confident prognostication, about getting back to the ground, before the deadly front arrived.

Writing this, I've now known Tim for over ten years, and I have to admit, when it comes to flying he is truly outstanding, at least 99.9% of the time. Moreover, he is fearless in a plane, as well as when jumping. He craves attention, as if he's insecure, when in fact with his amazing skills and abilities, he should be anything but. I'm not a shrink, so his condition makes no sense to me. But as I said, perhaps it's something to do with his childhood. Isn't it always? However, while the childhood thing might be the cause, Tim is the kind of person, who would have no mercy on criminals, who behaved badly, due to issues created in their childhood. Some guy, who's grown-up in foster care, and becomes a drug addict or dealer, Tim despises. To some degree,

I think that Tim's mind works way too fast, and so everyday life, and for that matter, most people just seem boring to him. Perhaps, what Tim doesn't realize is that average folks are just average, and so you can't expect most people to climb-up out of their oppressive past. Moreover, Tim is gifted with motivation the likes-of-which have rarely been known to occur in human beings. While self motivation is a reality, often it depends genetics controlling how much dopamine is inherently in the brain's *Substantia Nigra*, ergo you can't always blame people for not be industrious enough; the point being that sometimes it's extremely hard, if not impossible, to overcome your past.

As stated, the little jump plane had no co-pilot seat, so Kathy, Tim, and I were sitting on the floor. They were in the back facing forward, and my back was against the instrument panel, where the glovebox might normally be in a car, and so I was facing toward the rear of the plane. The pilot was to my immediate right. The plane's closed exit door was hard against my left shoulder. In this situation, my head was lower than the bottom edge of the plane's windows, so for a couple of minutes, I couldn't get a good look at the worsening weather. My seat belt

held my butt anchored to the floor of the plane, at least until the plane cleared 2000 feet, which took a while, since the little *Cessna 182* wasn't exactly fast. One rule in skydiving was that everyone kept their seatbelt on, until 2000 feet of altitude, then we'd unbuckled. That rule has something to do with the possibility of the plane losing power shortly after take-off, and under 2000 feet with the plane going down, there wouldn't be time to open the door, bail-out, and inflate the chute, so prior to that altitude, one must just hope the pilot can find a flat open piece of ground, or a vacant piece of highway to put down on.

Glancing at my wrist-mounted altimeter, I noticed we were at two thousand feet, and so Tim and I immediately unbuckled to raze-up on our knees and check the weather. The first thing I noticed was how badly the sky had deteriorated, and that the small *Cessna* was starting to bounce around much more, than I was accustomed to. But one look at the ever confident Tim and I knew we'd be okay. He seemed to be completely unfazed, yet at that point, that highly skilled pilot had to have known we were destined to be socked-into the storm. Kathy still looked calm, but I suspected that her serenity was

largely pharmaceutically mediated, and she still had her seatbelt on. Tim, the novice pilot, looked noticeably worried, and probably needed one of Kathy's valium.

As the *Cessna* continued its' circling ascent, the inside of the plane, which had no lighting, proceeded to quickly and depressingly darken, and more and more, Rick the beginner pilot was showing signs of distress. The plane proceeded to shake more and more. Kathy just continued playing with the straps on her rig and gazing at the back of novice Rick's head. Around five thousand feet, the ever confident Tim told her to unfasten her seatbelt, but she didn't respond. As long as I've known him, Tim seemed to always remain free of fear. Soon the sun was completely blocked-out by the churning dark mantel of leadened clouds and within a few short minutes, the heavens became so thick and black that it was hard to see ten feet past the propeller, much less to the ground.

A few minutes after that, visibility was down to zero, since even the propeller and wing tips were hard to make-out. At three in the afternoon, we were hopelessly locked into a violent nighttime sky. The small plane had no GPS, so we had no idea where we

were, save for an old questionable compass in the ancient plane's instrument panel. After a few minutes of flying blind, the odds were that we were over either a some large wooded area, or over the water (Narrow Gap Creek, Wolf Bay, Perdido Bay, Negro River, Mobile Bay, the Gulf of Mexico, etc.). The *Cessna* continued it's circling climb, but as it turned-out there was no getting above that massive storm. The firmament completely went to hell, and the heavens became fiercely savage and black as death, except for the occasional massive brilliantly blinding molten white lightning bolt, which went blasting and channeling it way through the murky boiling black soup, accompanied by the bone rattling thunder, chasing the violent winds. *Lightning this close looks like a liquid fire!* Never before had I seen such massive bolts lightning, up close, like scintillating tunnels of luminous thick liquid light, ripping through the pitch-black; some of which appeared to be traveling parallel to the earth, on the other hand, with the small plane being tossed about, it was sometimes was hard to tell exactly which direction was down. One bolt flashed across the front of the plane, missing us by no more than ten feet! The thing about lightning is that it's always in the past, gone by the time you realize you saw it... the speed of light versus the

speed of neuronal impulses. When you get old, life itself is sort of like that, sort of like when your flag is about to fall on the chess clock, but you're scrambling to finish with a checkmate.

The winds of the storm shook and thrashed the tiny plane, like a terrier shaking a doomed rat, and every few seconds, it felt like Thor's hammer had smashed the plane. *Can the wings come off this thing?* There was some metallic slapping and popping sounds coming from the tail section, as well as just under the cabin floor. Fearfully, I thought that any moment the little plane's rivets would all rip through the thin aluminum skin, and the flimsy flying machine would fly apart in the air. *If this plane survives this storm, I'll buy stock in Textron.* Periodically, it felt like the plane was thrown sideways, or blown straight down, so I held tight to whatever was available to take hold of: the seatbelt strap, the handle over the top of the exit door, the pilot seat's frame, etc.

Glancing at the novice pilot flying the plane, he looked like he needed a change of underwear. Rick was putting the ninja white knuckle death grip on the plane's yolk, and his protruding ping-pong ball eyes were staring straight ahead into the dark

flashing tumult, as if he actually saw something, where there was nothing of consequence to see. Nevertheless, the ever confident Tim, the pilot extraordinaire, still looked relaxed and calm, periodically smiling, as if this fierce battering of the plane was nothing but business as usual. I half expected him to start yawning, or maybe laughing. The guy had titanium balls too big to bowl with; after all, he'd trained to be a combat pilot and made the cut. He was something of a legend in flight school.

Kathy, the novice jumper, appeared to have come out of her valium haze and grasp the seriousness of the situation, ergo she looked like the novice pilot... terrified. Apparently, the adrenaline had finally begun to canceled-out some the effects of the valium. At that point, I was sure that Kathy was wishing that she'd munched-down a few extra benzos, before take-off. Even though Tim had told her to unfasten her seatbelt, she still hadn't, and we were around ten thousand feet, so I got her attention and pointed to her seatbelt, and she nervously unbuckled it, but she held onto the two pieces for stability, as she got her knees under her.

“You got any idea where the drop-zone is?” I

inquired of the tenderfoot pilot, expecting him to at least point in some direction.

“I got no fuck’n idea, Joey... no fucking idea... Jesus!” Novice Rick screamed those words at the top of his lungs, like he’d lost his ever-loving mind, or maybe he was just doing his best to be heard over the noise of the engine and the booming storm. This display of panic caught Tim’s attention, who then gently grabbed nervous Rick by the shoulders, squeezed, and calmly spoke directly into his right ear.

“Relax man! It’ll be fine. You’re doing fine. This storm won’t last forever. Nothing does. It’ll be okay, you’ll see, Rick.” Tim, the Dalai Lama of aviation, calmly advised, wearing a big smile, and giving me a wink.

“What should I do? I can’t see shit, man!” Novice Rick asked.

“It’ll be fine Rick, just stay cool, man. We’ve been mostly circling so we can’t be too far from the DZ (drop-zone).” The Dalai Lama spoke as he patted anxious Rick on the shoulder.

At this critical moment, the Dali Lama of aviation began to show his true colors. The generally

manic Tim, who lives and breathes hyperactivity, instructed Rick about maintaining his altitude and heading in a southeastern direction, so as to divert to another airfield. Tim glanced at the plane's compass, then pointed-out the direction of said airfield, to the frightened pilot. Amazingly, Tim delivers these instructions with the calm and assurance that a grocery store manager explaining where the *Uncle Ben's Rice* is located.

Tim was almost too composed... supremely confident, while under extreme pressure, and he actually continued to manage a genuinely warm smile, right though the most horrendous thrashing the little plane. It seemed that the worse the circumstances, the more smoothly Tim operated. *Jesus! Is Tim for real? He's some kind of courageous freak of nature?* Right then, Tim glanced at me and gave me a thumbs-up, to let me know everything was okay. The worse the situation became the better the Dali Lama functioned.

A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.

Winston Churchill

Between the roar of the *Cessna's* engine and the thunderous pommelling by the storm, it was nearly impossible to hear. The booms filled the gray and black sky like artillery shells, detonating just outside the plane. Brilliant lightning bolts continually fractured the sky. *It's amazing how quickly life can change!* Just a few minutes ago, I was enjoying the beautiful day, sitting at the picnic table, and then it had all gone to hell! I wondered whether the frightened Rick had even heard Tim, but Rick had nodded his head, as if he had. Still, the novice pilot was clearly panic stricken. His lips were tightly pulled back, exposing all his teeth, and his eyelids were fully retracted, seeming to caress his optic nerves.

The altimeter, strapped to my wrist, indicated that we were at 10,600 feet, about the usual jump altitude for the little *Cessna*. *I'm surprised we've made it this high!* Bailout altitude is generally higher for the larger planes. *There's no getting above the storm in this plane.* Since I was seated by the door, I went ahead and popped the latch, and the plane's frail little aluminum door violently flew up, banging into, and automatically locking onto, the catch on the

underside of the plane's right wing. Instantly, massive amounts of air rushed into the plane, along with the powerful smell of ozone. Hanging onto the door frame, I stuck my head out and looked straight down, desperately trying to get a visual fix on the ground, trying to get a handle on our location, but the black storm was far too fierce and thick to see more than a few feet. I didn't relish the idea of opening my chute in such a violent storm. *At least it's not raining.* Many times, I'd heard my Dad talk about, 'flying in the soup,' and so at long last, I genuinely realized what he was talking about. We had no clue where we were, and certainly didn't want to bail-out over the forest, which bordered on two sides of the drop-zone, nor over the water, which wasn't too far away. We had no idea what was below us. Try as I might, with the clouds being so dark and thick, there was just no way I could possibly see the planet. It was clear that Tim had made a major bad call about making one last jump. *Is there's a chance, Tim foresaw this adrenaline producing situation?* Many of my life's mistakes may have been made for that reason... a little excitement!

Perhaps Tim is the only guy I've ever known, who hated boredom more than I. Still, I never lost

faith in Tim, at least not until the day he lost faith in me, but I probably deserved it. That stormy afternoon, something told me, that with a little luck, he'd safely pull us through the storm.

Besides, it was better to have faith in Tim, than to pay homage to my nagging worthless fears, which were none to gently hammering on the inside of my skull. I glanced back at Tim and he just smiled, as if to say, 'Ain't life grand?' *This is weirder than Pulp Fiction, on mushrooms.* Following Tim's lead, I likewise acted as if all the insanity was normal. But while I don't believe I showed too much fear, unlike Tim, I sure couldn't calmly smile, and act like everything was hunky-dory.

Courage can be contagious.

A Time to Think by Ian W. Mearoly

At this point, Rick the nervous novice pilot, and Kathy the pill popper, were completely short-circuited... eyes bulging with skin pale as death. Amazingly, Tim actually seemed to be enjoying the day. *He acts like he just won the fuck'n lottery!* While again looking out the door of the plane, and

attempting to get a fix on something on the ground to clue me in as to our location, a minor miracle occurred. The bright light, from a lightning bolt, allowed me unexpectedly see for over two miles, straight down to the ground. I found myself staring into the maw of a gaping swirling tubular area free of clouds, and said tube seemed to go all the way to the ground. Low and behold, I could actually see the top of a farmhouse, which I recognized as being just a couple hundred yards east of our drop-zone.

To fear death may mean you're overly self-absorbed.

Pay Up Front by Amorie A. Yedwill

Consequently, I suddenly knew exactly where we were, and that the plane was pointed west! Although, judging from the motionless farmhouse, below, our headway relative to the ground, or what is known as, our 'ground speed,' appeared to be zero. It was suddenly obvious that the plane was fighting a fierce head wind, and we were in effect motionless. The little black plane was perfectly balanced directly above the spiraling black walled vortex, a huge clear

tube made of circling black clouds. It was spell-binding indeed to be looking down such a monstrous swirling dark tube to see only the familiar little farmhouse and a bit of its' small surrounding yard, yet the rest of the earth was completely obscured by the darkness of the storm. Turning to Tim and Kathy, I shouted.

“There’s the farmhouse. The one that’s right next to the fucking drop-zone guys, and there’s this weird clear long tunnel in the clouds, going all the way to the ground. Its like we’re stalled-out right over top of it... no ground speed, no headway! Look!”

I didn’t need to repeat it. In a fraction of a second, Tim had crowded the doorway. Looking down, he turned to face the rest of us in the plane, and above the noise of the engine, the storm, and the rattling of the plane, he quickly hollered his last set of instructions, in the doorway, then with a genuine laugh he jumped-out backwards, down into the black swirling tube. He wasn’t abandoning us, but just showing us the way.

“Let’s go! Don’t open your chutes before you get below the clouds! Rick, just keep flying southeast to the alternate field... follow your compass, buddy, and keep your altitude! You’ll be traveling with the

storm and be fine! Come-on guys let's jump, now!"

Fast as light, Tim had calmly launched himself out the door backwards, while still uttering the last couple of words, immediately followed by Kathy, and then myself. *Poor Rick!* There wasn't a tenth of a second of separation between each jumper.

Normally, you want at least a five-second separation. We all wanted out of the storm-torn flimsy motorized black aluminum coffin, with its thousands of disturbing rattling and popping sounds. Yes, we three had abandoned the terrified novice pilot, jumping out into that nightmare tempest, which to us made the *Perfect Storm*, look like a summer's breeze.

But oddly enough, once we were falling through the black tubular opening in the clouds, there didn't seem to be the slightest breath of wind; the air was relatively calm, almost totally still. In fact, there seemed to be something of an updraft, since our rate of fall appeared to be slower than usual. But maybe, it was the adrenaline tricking my time perception, once again, or maybe there really was a major updraft inside the tube. Fortunately it wasn't raining, because falling through the rain feels like you being shot by thousands of BBs. Been there done that, and hated it.

We were falling down the tunnel of rotating black clouds. The inside of the spinning black tube was about 60 meters across, when we entered it, and extended for well over a mile, straight down, but its diameter gradually narrowed, as we fell. Needless to say, it was more than strange to be completely surrounded by a whirling cylindrical wall of black clouds, rotating in a counter-clock wise (as viewed from above in the plane). The jump itself was quite easy. In fact, it was a snap, especially compared to the harrowing plane ride, we'd just escaped. As each of the three of us would approach the black cloud wall of the swirling tunnel, we would just dip a shoulder to turn and fly around inside, as we slowly fell. To say the least, it was a peculiar spectacle. *My altimeter seems to be working, only more slowly, than usual.* While falling, Tim was still smiling, then he looked at me and seemed to laugh. Sometimes it was truly hard to decide whether Tim was extremely brave, or just a wee bit crazy, or both. We'd all generally smile and laugh during a fair weather skydive, but this was anything but.

No doubt, things were far from being a snap for poor Rick, the beginner pilot, still above us, and flying blind in a raggedy black *Cessna* of contentious

reliability, while locked in the death grip of the violent black storm. He'd only had his pilot's license for two weeks, when we'd abandoned him. Later, I found-out Rick was simply followed Tim's instructions, flying a southeast heading, using the plane's compass. Luckily, after about fifteen minutes, Rick cleared the edge of the storm and found the alternate airport, another grass field but with hangers. Thanks to Tim's last second instruction, the plane's faithful old compass, and sheer guts, the horrified beginner had found his way out of the storm.

Rick later told us that he'd made a baby soft landing, put the plane in a hanger, borrowed someone's car, and went to find a bar in the nearby town of Pensacola, Florida, the home of Naval Aviation. I'd given him a fifty-fifty chance. When I'm seventy, which isn't too far away, I think I'll sign-up for flying lessons.

The cloud base of the storm had risen to about four thousand feet above the ground. As the three of us jumpers came out of the shadowy whirling tunnel into the clear air, we quickly opened our chutes, maybe fifteen hundred thousand feet above the ground. The drop-zone was plainly visible and not far

away. Once my chute was opened, I briefly turned back to see, from where we'd exited the tunnel. As you've probably guessed, the tunnel was in fact a tornado, the funnel of which, had luckily only extended half way to the ground, from the base of the clouds. I then wondered, how many people can say they've skydived down a tornado? Had have to be a relatively rare privilege. Thank you, Tim!

Many of the risks we take in life hold an enigmatic element. Tim had actually embraced the situation, even to the point he seemed to milk it for all the excitement and joy it was worth. Kathy avoided it, with valium, but still managed to make the jump. I was just an observer, who was anything but bored. Rick controlled his fear and survived the day, saving everyone and the plane. Some folks, who've lead their lives with great care and planning, have to work at convincing themselves their lives have been worth it; that's not the case for Tim. Each three pounds of gray mush has its own needs. I suppose, one person's horror is another's delight.

Not long after that crazy jump, Kathy gave up skydiving. It was likely a good thing, considering her infamous landings. Her bones had to have been made of rubber, since she never broke one, yet often she'd

hit the ground like a freight train. Perhaps, if she given-up the valium, her landings would have improved, or possibly the reverse would have occurred. According to research, nothing messes-up timing quite like a big dose of valium. Like I said, her landings were even worse than mine, and that's saying something.

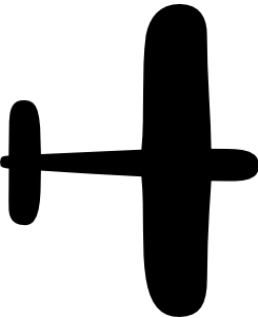
Usually, she'd flare the chute too high, far too soon, then she'd drop straight down, like a rock, while still about twenty or thirty feet above the ground. I don't see how she managed to never break a leg, or her back. She'd hit the ground so hard that sometimes a dust cloud would envelop her, and I was sure that she was dead or severely injured. But she always managed to get-up and walk away, with just a few big bruises. She is clearly a brilliant and extremely sociable woman, and perhaps better suited to something more academic. Every time she's hit the ground, her poor worried husband, Mason, would worriedly sprint out onto the field to make sure she wasn't dead.

I don't know what happened to the neophyte pilot, but Rick was the drop-zone's pilot, for only another week, then left. Tim and I continued on jumping for a few years. Thinking back about the

storm, the memory remains clear, but it also seems like a something of a preternatural dream, as if it never really happened. To say the least, Tim was never humdrum, and he was an amazingly great friend. He was perhaps the most complex individual I've ever known, and blessed with lively thought, superb flying skills, courage, and a zest for life. Best of luck, Tim.

The only time that skydiving was a miserable proposition was in the winter or in the rain. That may be why the drop zone charged less to jump in the wintertime. If the temperature was forty degrees on the ground, it was a miserable minus ten degrees at fourteen thousand feet, but worse yet, when falling at one hundred and twenty miles per hour, the temperature would be between minus thirty and minus fifty degrees. To make matters worse, when you jump, you can't put too many clothes on, because if your arms become too restricted by thick clothing, so it's hard to reach the little ball under the parachute container to throw-out, and deploy the chute. Often in the winter, I'd start screaming from the cold, shortly after jumping out of the plane, swearing I'd never do it again. Then, after warming-up in the packing shack, I'd pack my chute, and go

up again. Skydiving can be an enslavement.



OBJ

THE DEATHS OF JOHN AND JIM

As a student skydiver, I had two primary instructors; I say two primary, because when you're learning to skydive, all the more experienced jumpers will happily give you advice, and in effect, they all become your teachers. Despite that, you should only give credence to those with the most skill, experience, and who are known for their attention to safety! But, even though my two primary instructors were highly accomplished men, with thousands jumps, and well known for their attention to safety, both later died while skydiving. The two were extraordinary jumpers, ergo their deaths may have figured into why I stopped jumping after only 429 jumps; that, and the fact that, if I bought the farm, there was no one I trusted to lovingly raise my child. The more I jumped, the more I realized my child too important, or maybe I was just too afraid.

Not long after the previously mentioned tornado jump, one of my two aforementioned skydiving instructors, John Combs, died. He was an outstanding man in every respect; one of those rare

people, who was highly intelligent, kind, public spirited in word and deed, and as if that wasn't enough, he had an ever-ready sense of humor. Furthermore, young women would come to the DZ, just to gaze at, and flirt with, John. He'd made millions, working as a model for various high-end magazines, traveling the world to pose in photo shoots, with unbelievably gorgeous women. John, like Tim, was a lady's man. He had been a Navy pilot, and was also a world class professional skydiver. John jumped using a relatively small parachute {(relative to his body weight); he weighed about two hundred pounds, and used a 150 square foot ram-air parachute}, and his high speed landings were a death defying site to behold. The first time I saw him dropping in on the drop-zone, he'd just executed a low altitude hook turn, and I was sure he was about to die. It looked like there wasn't time for him to pullout of his steep dive; but of course, he flared his chute at the last possible second, barely managing to do pull-up and avoid slamming into the earth, while shooting across the grass covered DZ, narrowly escaping death, smiling the entire time.

As stated, the skydiving course was only nine jumps (the tenth jump was solo and free), but there

was also a four hour safety lecture with a written exam, as well as a one hour class conducted at a swimming pool, where you went underwater and a parachute was thrown over the top of you, so you could learn how to successfully get out from beneath it, without getting tangled in the lines, if you ever landed in the water. There wasn't much to completing these things: judging when to jump out of the plane so that the winds would carry you to the DZ, when (at what altitude) to deploy your parachute, what to do if your chute fails, what to do if your lines twist-up, what to do if your chute gets tangled-up with another parachute, how to do a parachute landing fall should you land too hard, how to pack your chute, how to do a water landing, when to flare your chute, how to do spins, flips, barrel-rolls, tracking, signals, etc. If you make any mistakes during the learning phase, expect to catch a raft of criticism. Hence, becoming a licensed skydiver is intellectually and physically relatively easy; still, becoming a safe and successful skydiver requires practice, attention to detail, the ability to react correctly under pressure should something goes amiss, good depth perception, as well as a certain amount of luck. Luck figures into almost everything in life.

Not getting what you desire can be a form of good luck.

The Broken Chip by Adrian Morley

During the fifth jump of my beginners course, John Combs was my 'fly-along' instructor. We bailed out the door, with him holding onto my left shoulder strap. Once out into the air, he let go, and we were falling belly-to-earth, each in what's called the 'Lazy W' position. He was about three feet in front of me. If you can momentarily ignore the fact that the earth is rushing in your direction, you could say it feels like you're flying. John was to supervise the various course-required maneuvers: 360 degree turn around to the right, 360 degree turn around to the left, front flip, back flip, each with an altitude check, then I was supposed track-away from John, perform the usual signal for deployment, pop my chute, then steer to the stop zone, and make an into-the-wind landing.

Once free falling in the belly-to-earth position, for a second or two, I looked down to locate the position of the drop zone, but couldn't spot it. Then, the second I looked back-up to check on John, he wasn't there! It was as if he'd magically disappeared!

As mentioned, I saw John bailout with me, holding on to my shoulder strap, but after looking down for a visual fix for the location of the drop-zone, he'd inexplicably vanished into thin air! Wondering where he'd gone, I looked left and right, then above and below, but John wasn't to be found. He seemed to have literally dematerialized! Then, I realized that the only place he could be was directly behind me, ergo I did a 180 degree turn, but again, John was there! *How the hell is this possible?* Having checked all possible locations: above, below, left, right, in front and behind me, I was solidly baffled. There was no doubt that John had exited the door of the plane with me. *Where the hell did he go?* Throughout this worrisome and perplexing situation, I was dropping at a 120 mph. Bare-in-mind, that I was a rank beginner and seriously uncertain about my situation, my ability to: properly deploy my chute, at the correct altitude, detect the wind direction, safely land my chute into the wind at the DZ, and I still hadn't located the drop-zone. That last fact was worrying the hell out of me. John's mysterious disappearance was more than slightly disconcerting, since I was counting on him to help me locate the drop-zone, to allow me to follow him to the DZ. At altitude, the ground looked like a patchwork quilt,

and it was difficult to determine on which patch the DZ was located. After all, the landing strip was green grass and most of southern Alabama was green. Plummeting a few more thousand feet, I finally solved the mystery. Instead of turning around gradually, I quickly spun around, and sure enough, there he was. John had been maneuvering such that, as I had turned around, he had flown to remain positioned on my heels, out of my sight, as a joke on me, the newcomer... just what every novice skydiver needs, more stress.

When I suddenly spun around and spotted him, he was smiling and laughing, falling through the blue skies. This made me laugh, too. We were both laughing falling at 120 mph. What a great guy! I'll always remember him smiling and laughing, falling through the brilliant blue skies, that day. Teaching me that the sport was a fun and happy thing, not a difficult worrisome task, which required scary concentration. John and I then separated and deployed our chutes.

As mentioned, a few months later, John perished in a freak accident. Like I said, luck insinuates itself into nearly everything, that's if you eliminate the predetermination mandated by the laws of particle

physics. The day he died, John jumped with an inordinately large camera, mounted to the top of his skydiving helmet. He had mounted it there himself, in his home workshop. When John deployed his chute, the violent winds had somehow made the chute swirl toward John's head, and the fabric snagged on the camera and its' mount. John cut away the first chute ('Cutting away' means you grab and pull a thing that looks like a small bean bag, attached on the upper right chest strap, and the main chute is released to fly up and away.). When John cut away his chute, it came out of the rigs container, but sadly it stayed snagged on the camera.

The trailing chute remained collapsed and strung-out upward from his helmet-mounted camera. The streaming chute caused John to be powerfully spun around and around, as if he were on the end of the long arm on a high speed centrifuge, ergo the helmet's chin strap was forcefully biting into his throat. Most likely this was making it difficult for John to breathe, while he was being violently spun around and around. Perhaps, the strap was so tight that it was nearly impossible to release the clasp that held the strap to the helmet. Because of the violent spinning and corresponding g-forces, as well as the

probable strangulation, John may have had trouble staying conscious. Still, throughout all of this, he still managed to deploy his reserve chute.

Regrettably, the newly emerging reserve chute tangled in the main chute, and so John struck the ground, trailing a snarled twisted-up streamer made of the two collapsed chutes. The impact was horrific and knocked John's jaw sideways across his face, and broke countless bones throughout his body. The two tangled chutes had slowed his decent, just enough that John managed to live for a few hours. He died in the hospital early that evening. Everyone seemed to have their own theory about exactly what went wrong with John's jump that day, and the more obsessive people, are the most certain that their theory is the correct one. You've now read my theory, and I certainly could be wrong about the details. But I'm not wrong about what a fine human being John was.

As mentioned, I still own and jump one of John's rigs, a *Racer* container, with a *Saber* 150 (square feet) main chute, and a 150 reserve. So every time I jumped, I thought of John. John's rig is getting old, but it still works well, as does my memory of him. Thanks John, for teaching me to jump, and for those

those spectacular daredevil low altitude hook turns. You were never boring, my friend! You were truly a great and good man, and we all miss you.

Although John was financially quite well off, he was a pious christian, who spent much of his free time going to prisons and jails, preaching the gospel. Moreover, he routinely opened his lavish house to the homeless. He was a powerfully built man, and could easily pickup and carry big homeless passed-out drunks. He'd thrown them over his shoulder, load them into his car, take them to his house, and dump them in his guest room. John actually walked the walk. As a result, at his funeral, hundreds of men and women, from all walks of life, were there to pay homage to a great American. The somber memorial service resembled something like a penitentiary homecoming. The priest said that the attendance at the funeral that day was a testament to John's life, and indeed it was!

My other instructor, Jim T. Lorrac, was a Green Beret. When Jim died, he was a practicing urological surgeon at the local Navy hospital. At the DZ, he was affectionately known as, "Mr. Safety," and he constantly looked after our safety. The man was the epitome of a good husband and father, but was

distinctly different, from John. Where John was the extreme extrovert, Jim was quite reserved. Nevertheless, both were great men, each in their own way. Jim died doing a tandem jump at a drop-zone in nearby Mississippi. There is still an ongoing FAA investigation into his death, but I've heard through the grapevine, that the man conducting the investigation is the same man, who packed the Green Beret's chute the day he died. Perhaps, that is true; perhaps it's not.

Jim suffered the rare double failure, where both the main and the reserve chutes failed. Word is that after the second chute failed to inflate, he somehow managed to steer toward and smashed down into some nearby mud, and at the last second, right before impact, Jim stuck-out one arm and one leg, both on the same side of his body, so the air flipped him onto his back. Once flipped onto his back, Jim then wrapped his arms around his tandem passenger, and offered his body as a cushion for the tandem passenger, who because of Jim's efforts, managed to live, but obviously Jim died, crushed between the earth and his passenger. He too was truly an exceptionally good man, courageous in the military, and in the act of dying! In the military, they don't

call them 'special operators' for nothing. Both of my fine instructors passed away, doing what they enjoyed. I'm fairly certain neither man feared the impact.

Not that it doesn't happen, but the fact that Jim had a double failure is odd, since he usually meticulously packed his own rig. Why Jim jumped a rig packed by someone else might have been owing to limited time, before takeoff. But even if you're not too neat about how you pack those ram-air chutes, they will usually open, regardless. Occasionally, I'd pack my chute different ways, yet it never failed me. Some guys 'trashed-pack' their chutes, meaning they just stuffed them back into the container haphazardly, and the chute still worked fine. The modern day ram air parachute is an amazingly dependable and highly maneuverable invention. What generally kills skydivers is not a failed chute, but other things, such as: misjudged low altitude hook turns (turning while on final approach), colliding with another jumper and then getting the chutes tangled, hitting a structure upon landing, landing in trees, jumping in clouds with little visibility and ending-up in the water or tangled in the power-lines, etc.

Since Jim died, the local drop-zone has closed. The retired Admiral and highly decorated combat vet, who owned the drop-zone, was Jim's father, and I imagine, that since Jim had died skydiving, the sight of all those skydivers, landing in his back yard was just too much for the old gentleman and his fine wife (Jim's mom). The Admiral is a true patriot and an excellent man, just like his brave son, Jim. We all miss you, Jimmy, especially my child; she loves you dearly.

OBJ



KNOCKED OUT IN THE AIR

With only twenty jumps to my credit, I was knocked unconscious, while still five thousand feet in the air. Having recently finished the skydiving course, I was in search of a dependable used parachute-rig to purchase, so I wouldn't have to keep spending money, renting the ancient used rigs from

the drop-zone. In those days, Mitch Cobel, the rather greedy owner of the DZ, was a guy, who cared more about making a buck, than he was interested in his customers' safety. Mitch didn't skydive, but would occasionally fly the jump plane. One of the ways Mitch made money was buying used parachute-rigs, jumpsuits, altimeters, and helmets, then he'd sell them to the skydivers for as much money as he could get. But as mentioned, Mitch may have cared more about the dollar, than he respected human life. It's an all too common phenomenon in the corporate world, today, i.e., fuck the planet, and forget about solar and wind power, so the coal industries can continue to get rich, and the hell with people's health. Moreover, the hell with making medical cures, since we need big Pharma to steal every last dime they can. And, let's keep those bloody wars, air and drone strikes, and military conflicts going, so the military industries stay rolling in trillions of dollars. Lastly, let's don't put too many electric cars on the street, lest big oil lose profits.

One particular skydiving rig, Mitch had no doubt purchased at a terrific discount, since it was in poor condition. It was the quality of rig that I now realize most people would simply throw away. The

container fabric was faded and well worn. One of the seams of the container had a four inch split, and looked like it had been restitched by a blind monkey. I recall wondering if parts of the canvas container weren't dry-rotted. Moreover, when Mitch first got the rig, the buckle for the chest strap was missing, and he'd replaced it with a large heavy metal buckle, as you might otherwise have found on a scuba diving weight belt, or one of those heavy metal seat-belt buckles used on passenger planes.

The weighty clunky steel buckle was way too big and much too heavy for a skydiving rig. Quite possibly, he'd put the rig together from parts people had discarded, or traded or had sold cheaply. At that time, I was a beginner, and wrongly assumed that some rigs just came with enormously massive metal buckles, and at the time, I mistakenly assumed that I could trust in Mitch's integrity. Unwisely, I assumed that because he was such a bright man, that he must also be honest. Never underestimate the number of people, who are willing to do you harm to make two bits. As soon as Mitch heard that I was in the market for a rig, he smilingly approached me with the unsavory rig.

“Hey, Joey... I got this great rig for sale. It's a

little dirty, a little worn, but this baby is perfectly sound and dependable. I guarantee you're gonna love it. It's just right for you. Just try it on. It is super reliable, and I'll give you a sweet deal." Mitch encouraged me to try-out the dubious rig.

"You sure this old rig is okay, to jump, Mitch? It looks kind of old." I asked, eyeing its questionable condition.

"Hell yes, Joey! It's terrific, with a solid dependable 200 main, and a 170 reserve to back you up, if you have any trouble. The larger size chute is perfect for a beginner, like you. It works so good, it might as well be brand new, and that's all that matters. You'll love it. I'll give you a sweet deal. If it seems dirty, just take the chutes out of the container, go to a car wash, and use one of those high pressure wands to clean it up (This actually is a common way skydivers clear their rigs.). Just dry it with a hair dryer, then just hook the chute lines back in, and she's good as new. In a few months, a rigger may need to do a little stitching here and there, but that's no big deal. He'll only charge you ten or twenty bucks." Mitch falsely assured me, about the dry-rotted parachute container.

After putting it on, I noticed the rig's frame and

harness seemed to be made for a much larger man. Even after I'd completely tightened the leg straps and chest straps, but the massive rig still hung loose on me. It seemed to be designed for a giant. Soon, I would come to realize that the rig was not just too loose but dangerously loose. I was an idiot to have considered the rig, but I was a beginner and trusted in Mitch's advice; again, never suspecting that his greed could supersede his concern for my life. Mitch was an actor, par excellence.

When raising my child, I periodically tell her to always remember, that there are people, who will celebrate her death and dance on her grave, if they can make coin off it. It seems there's a fair percentage of such folks who are judges, salesmen, politicians, lawyers, radio talk show hosts, surgeons, evangelists, and CEOs. In my limited opinion the judges are generally good people, who try to make a just decision, but there are about ten percent, who are psychopaths, who just love to stick it to the convicted. They are the ones, who campaign on being tough on crime. If they're lucky enough to make it to old age, they'll probably begin to attend church, and be among some of the most pious, or at least they'll believe they are. The rest of the

parishioners will probably never, or too slowly come to, realize what kind of sick person has joined their congregation.

“Mitch, don’t ya think this rig’s too loose on me? And, what’s with this big heavy metal buckle on the chest strap? Is this big steel buckle supposed to be on a skydiving rig?” I asked this, while putting my thumbs under the shoulder straps, and lifted them up and down, to show him how loose they were.

“It’s not too loose Joey; and yes, it’s supposed to be like that. Besides, you can always take it to a rigger and get the shoulder straps adjusted later. Don’t worry, the buckle will work fine. Sure the buckle is not the usual one, but it’s actually a better buckle, more solid. It’s a great buckle. And, when the rig is a little loose, it’s more comfortable, less confining. It’s really no problem. In the air, it’s actually an advantage! Look Joey, stop worrying and just go ahead and jump the rig, and as a favor to you, I won’t charge you the usual \$20 rental fee, nor the five dollar repack fee. Just pay for the jump. You’ll see. You’ll love it and you’re gonna beg me to sell it to you, and I’ll give you a real deal.” Mitch advised.

The plane was running great, and it was a beautiful clear blue sky, so I assumed it was going to

be a trouble-free jump. The little *Cessna* had climbed to just over 10,000 feet, the door opened, and out I went. Most experienced jumpers open their chutes around two to three thousand feet from the ground, but since I was a novice, when my wrist altimeter read 5000 feet, I popped the main chute. The extra altitude would give me more time should I encounter a problem, like a line-over, or a chute failure.

It was then the early morning and I was just waking-up, feeling relaxed from a rare good night's sleep. With my eyes still closed, I knew it had been a good night's sleep, since I couldn't recall doing my usual multiple nightly wake-ups. Just before I opened my eyes, I wondered if I had to go to work. I could hear a soft, repetitious, 'puff-puff-puff-puff...' sound. *I must have left the ceiling fan on.* Thinking that I was at home in bed, I opened my eyes, assuming I see the spinning ceiling fan. But instead, I shockingly found myself in the air, looking at the surrounding countryside! *Holy shit! What the fuck?*

Immediately, I checked my wrist altimeter and noted that I had somehow lost 3000 feet of slow decent with the chute open. My altimeter read 2000 feet. The continuous 'puff-puff-puff-puff...' sound was being made by the 'slider' of my inflated parachute,

flapping in the wind, as the fortunately inflated chute surged forward. The slider is a piece of rectangular fabric, about two feet by one and a half feet, with metal grommets in its four corners, to keep the four groups of lines separated, so they don't tangle. I recalled deploying at 5000 feet, so evidently, I had been unconscious for a good while, slowly gliding down from 5000 to 2000 feet, under the open canopy.

Doing the math, I figured I'd been unconscious for a solid minute, just hanging comatose in the loose straps of my rig. But how did I get knocked-out? There was no way that I could have just gone to sleep in the middle of a jump? *What the hell happened? Did I have a stroke?* Then, when I looked down at the ground, I saw a large dark blur, like a fuzzy shadow, at the bottom edge of my visual field, just below my nose. *What the hell is that dark area? Is something wrong with my vision?* With my hands, I investigated the dark blur and found that it was actually the end of my severely swollen chin.

A massive hematoma (blood-filled bump) protruded from the point of my chin. The swelling was like a golf ball, and so I realized what had happened. When the chute had suddenly inflated, the

extremely loose over-sized rig had been violently jerked upward, and as a result, the large metal buckle of the chest strap (I later found out is legally not supposed to be used on skydiving rigs.) had smacked me square on the point of the chin, knocking me out cold. Since I still had 2000 feet of altitude, when I awoke, I was able to fly the chute the short eighth of a mile back to the DZ, and safely land. For as swollen as my chin was, it didn't hurt much, just looked weird, like a purple plum was stuck on the point of my chin.

After discussing that fiasco with a few of my fellow jumpers, I was no longer friends with Mitch, and began to realize that he might be mentally ill. He did other things which endangered jumpers, but increased his profit margin. He'd sometimes fly low altitude runs, with beginners on board, to save on fuel cost. One jumper, almost bought the farm as a result of such a low altitude jump. Mitch was worse than an ego-maniac. Most likely, he was your standard run-of-the-mill psychopath. I sought no revenge, although it was tempting, but instead I just stopped talking with him.

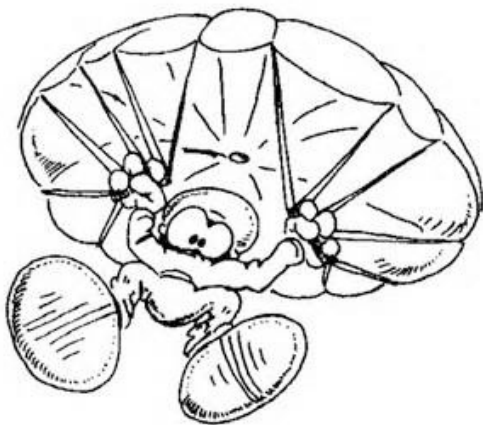
How much has been unsettled by trying to settle

old scores?

Ancient Arabs and Old Jews by AY Rewomd

According to my Dad, the best way to deal with such folks is to either kill them, or to negatively impact their cash flow. If you do something covert to hit such people in the wallet, odds are good they'll never figure out, who did it, since they've likely wronged too many people. Every night the plane, which Mitch owned, sat unguarded on the edge of the grass field. It would have been easy to damage it, but I never did.

OBJ



BREAKING MY NECK

One afternoon in the middle of a skydiving jump, I snapped my neck! As the months passed, I almost fully recovered. However, the tricep muscle on the back of my right arm will probably always be a little smaller and slightly weaker, as will be the right side of my chest, owing to a small amount of nerve damage. Moreover, sometimes the right arm gets weird feelings, and occasionally the right shoulder is fairly painful, so it's difficult to sleep some nights.

The broken neck happened violently, and for a few seconds was oh so terrifying! The accident transpired while high in the air, doing a high speed head-down run. What I was doing at the time, was probably the one of the most fun things, I did as a skydiver, even more fun than walking on the wings of an old plane called a *Porter*, but probably not as fun as was flying the bird-suit. The aforementioned high speed thing was flying in the 'head down position.' In that vertical (to the earth) head down position you could attain massive amounts of speed, then by arcing your back you'd transition to the

horizontal, and suddenly you'd shoot across the sky.

To begin such a jump, I'd stand outside the plane, with only my toes barely inside the threshold of the aircraft's jump door, while holding onto a small stabilizing grip, which is nothing more than a three foot aluminum bar, about two inches thick, firmly bracketed to the outside of the plane, about six inches above the exit door. Needless to say, the winds outside the moving plane were substantial. Jump altitude for the *Caravan* (a turbo prop aircraft) was usually between fourteen to fifteen thousand feet. To initiate the jump, I'd bend my legs, release my grip from the aluminum bar, then spring up and backwards, bowing my back and arcing over, then I'd continue to arch over backwards, until I was going straight down head-first, with my body stretched out straight, like an arrow (head down and toes pointed skyward). I'd then continue like that, much like a springboard diver, but with my arms straight against my sides, with my fingers together and palms slightly cupped and facing toward the front of my body. My legs, arms, and back would be straight.

After dropping in the that position, for a few thousand feet, I'd have built-up an ungodly amount of speed, usually running around 155 to 175 miles

per hour, maybe more. Of course such jumps don't last as long, but they are oh so thrilling. Perchance, part of the thrill of skydiving may be, that in the back of your mind, there's father time waiting to lay claim, but when doing head-down work, the wait isn't nearly as long; hence more thrill. Occasionally, I'd hold a digitized mini anemometer (wind speed gauge) in my hand to measure my downward speed. In this situation, some highly skillful jumpers have attained speeds of over 350 miles per hour in the course of a regular skydive. Felix Baumgartner traveled about 843 miles per hour, when he had jumped from some serious altitude (128,100 feet altitude). Felix broke the sound barrier (1.25 mach), but he'd jumped from a balloon gondola, on the edge of outer space; whereas, sport jumpers usually only exit at 5,000 to 17,000 feet.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vvbN-cWe0A0>

Sometimes military HALO (high altitude low opening) jumpers exit between 20,000 to 35,000 feet, but to the best of my knowledge they don't do head-down. But, if you want to get to the ground in a

hurry, head-down is definitely the way to go. Their combat jumps often must be deadly serious, and strictly utilitarian. Skydiving is risky enough, but without the benefit of unfriendly bullets as you near the ground, which special ops guys may face, when jumping into hostile territories. That's why I think it might be useful for them to specialize in landing in limited space/smaller clearings, using those dangerous but highly effective low altitude hook turns. But this would require extensive specialized training. Because of the soldier's limited mobility, owing to larger low-performance chutes, some have been known to never make it to the ground alive.

Smaller ram-air chutes (relative to the jumper's body weight) are more maneuverable and can land faster, but such landings require extensive training, since they're much more dangerous. Pro jumpers regularly jump small chutes, thousands of jumps, and executive high speed low altitude hook-turns, routinely. A combat jumper could greatly improve their survivability with such skills. The problem is that there is a fair risk of injury during the training to execute dependable low altitude hook turns for fast landing. On the other hand, that risk of learning such landings would be negated, if the jumper

practiced them on the beach, and landed in about five feet of water. Military jumpers could also practice these landings over the water, with, and without carrying various simulated loads of equipment. The salt water soaked rigs could simply be hosed off with fresh water and hung-out to dry. Special ops guys are generally great at all of their skills, except for skydiving. This is not to say, that there are a few great special ops jumpers, but there may be too few.

In WWII, many combat jumpers, who jumped the old round chutes, would hit the ground hard, and sometimes be dragged over rocks by the winds, or through barbed wire, or be blown off course and right into the waiting enemy. Yes, sport jumping is far different, than combat jumps... much less stress. Nonetheless, your average sport jumpers has a lot more jumping experience, than does your average military jumper.

After dropping six or eight thousand feet and building-up tremendous head-down velocity, I'd again arch my back, raising-up my chin, so suddenly, the air slammed into my chest and I'd pull through, to be the belly to earth position, but because of excessive the speed, which I'd have built-up doing

head-down, I'd then shoot across the sky, flying parallel to the earth. The feeling of jetting across the sky was beyond thrilling. It was as if I was actually flying. I'd steer right and left, by just dipping the corresponding shoulder. It sounds easy and it was, but initially it required a small amount of practice to maintain aerodynamic balance, which took me about twelve attempts, before I started to get the hang of head down flying. The diving fish hawks of my childhood, living in the cliffs, just off my backyard in Spain, made their nimble steering corrections in much the same way, while closing-in on an unsuspecting fish, which had strayed too close to the surface.

Skydiving is plainly addicting, so on weekends, when the weather was bad, and no one got to jump, those nights, I'd invariably dream I was skydiving or just flying like a bird, no chute required. After bailing out and falling a few thousand feet, I'd simply begin to fly, and then gently land... safe, and sound. Almost all skydivers have these wonderfully vivid dreams.

The reason I got into head-down work, was that I wasn't too effective at doing relative work (skydiving in group formations). Head-down was great fun, and

that way I didn't have to worry about messing-up fellow skydiver's formations. I'd pissed-off too many fellow jumpers by screwing-up their formation dives.

The reason my neck was broke and I became temporarily paralyzed had to do with the fact that a sweet, nice looking, young woman forgot the rules , ignoring a very simple, yet extremely important, skydiving rule; that you never attempt to follow the plane, after you jump-out of the plane. This rule is important because people, who later jump out of the plane, may plow into the jumper following the plane. If the follower suddenly opens their chute, the later jumper, who's still falling, may pass through said chute. A few seconds after someone jumps out of the plane, they often quickly become invisible to others. Such collisions can happen to even the best of jumpers. Especially since different skydivers open at different altitudes. Skydivers have literally been cut into two pieces from such midair collisions. Just ask the *Golden Knights*, and those guys are about as good as skydivers can be.

<http://danabowman.com/dana-biography.php>

That deadly scenario has happened many times, and probably will continue to happen. But, in my case, I didn't hit the young woman to break my neck. I broke my neck without touching her or her parachute. Still, she was certainly at fault. As mentioned, skydiving does allow you to move horizontally across the sky, even without the head-down work, regardless if you are falling slowly at 120 mph; all you have to do is extend your legs and pull in your arms, to travel forward. If you extend your arms out in front of yourself, and pull your legs in, you'll travel backwards.

After a jumper exits the plane, he or she may safely track perpendicular to the line of travel of the plane, or fly in the opposite direction from which the plane is proceeding; but once again, the cardinal rule is to never-ever follow the plane! The only time this rule may be broken is if you're the last or only person, exiting the plane.

It's fairly easy to break the rule, since sometimes when exiting the plane, the violent winds will spin and flip the jumper, causing them to lose sight of the plane, and their orientation to the aircraft. This probably happened to the girl. But once stable, she should have tried to spot the plane, so as to not

inadvertently follow it. All you have to do is to flip over on your back for a second and look for the aircraft, before turning-back-over and continuing the jump... just a quick visual check for the position of the plane. Alas, the young lady apparently hadn't done the airplane check, and so she had unintentionally broken my neck.

After she jumped, I had waited what should have been plenty of time to establish a safe distance between she and I, before jumping. Obviously, I now realize that I should have waited a few seconds longer, since she followed the plane. As usual, I climbed out of the plane and did my slow arching half-back-flip, out and away from the plane, and went into the high speed head-down position, arms on my sides with thumbs against my thighs, fingers together, palms flat and forward, legs fully extended together, and toes pointed skyward. Rocketing down the side of a group billowy white clouds the size of Mount Everest, the earth and all my various worries seemed inconsequential. One grows-up looking up at the picturesque clouds and the sky, ergo it's a thrill of sorts to be high in the blue sky, looking down at the clouds with the earth far below; reality as we're accustomed to has flipped. And sometimes, if you

jump-out at higher altitudes, and you look toward the horizon, you sense the curvature of the earth. These can be riveting and inspiring sights. Sure you can see these sights riding in a plane, but it's different when you know that you're about to jump out into it.

Building up speed, I was probably doing roughly 160 mph, as I left the clear air, and speared into a monstrously large bright white cloud. That day, the massive glaringly white cumulus happened to extend higher than usual. Spearing into the cloud, I couldn't see more than a few yards, and was flying nearly blind. Worse yet, the moisture of the cloud had fogged my goggles. At that speed, the sound of the air passing my ears was so loud, that my brain had literally shut the sound off. It shut off the massive feel of all the air slamming into my body, so I became only my eyes intently staring through my misty goggles, and the pleasant anticipation, that I would soon be punching through the underside of the giant white cloud, and then shooting horizontally across the wild blue yonder, like Superman, my childhood hero.

The cloud was a dazzling dreamlike haze, but all that bright glare can be dangerous, since hitting

another skydiver at 160 miles per hour is usually instant death. Often one of the two people is cut in half, but both often die. Consequently, I was hyper-alert, as I shot head-down through the cloud, and was just in the process of thinking about canceling the head-down run all together, due to the poor visibility, and switching to the slower classic belly-to-earth position (the lazy W), but a fraction of a second before I acted, the young woman came shooting into my peripheral vision, following the plane. At first, she was only a flash of pink and yellow, the colors of her jumpsuit. She was flying horizontally below me, on a perfect intersect, directly into my path. We were destined to be soon sharing the same bloody spot in the cloud.

In the blindingly luminous cloud, she looked like a pastel phantasm, wearing a pink and yellow jumpsuit with matching helmet and parachute container. There's nothing quite like a brightly colorful impending death. The I spotted her color I realized that collision was imminent, and so my right arm started for the leather throw-out ball on the bottom of my container to deploy my chute. Grabbing the ball first try, I threw it out to my right, and the small pilot chute sailed up behind me,

pulling out my main chute, hopefully to allow me to avoid the impact. Simply trying to steer away at my 160 mph speed might not have worked, maybe it would have, but I didn't have but a tiny fraction of a second to act, no time to think, only to react.

Deploying the chute was only a reflex. Luckily, the rig I was using that day instantly opened. My two rigs now both have a small pocket sewn onto their sliders, so that they open far more slowly and more gently. Months later, I would start jumping again, and continued with my head-down runs, but never again did I do any high speed shit inside clouds.

Generally, the skydiver falls belly-to-earth with the arms and legs somewhat extended, in what's called the lazy W position, so as mentioned, you're only traveling only around 120 mph, but even at that slower speed, a hard opening can be painful, even injurious. More than a few jumpers have endured broken necks and backs from normal chute openings. Such sudden openings have been nicknamed, 'shotgun openings.' But I was traveling about 160 mph. That head-down opening was more like a cannon blast.

With what seemed like sudden approaching death, my time perception dramatically slowed,

perhaps more than ever before. While my chute was racing out above me, I watched her coming closer and closer. The pink and yellow skydiver was looking down at the earth, vectoring in such a way that she'd be directly beneath me, as I descended from above. I was about to plow head-first into her back. If it had to be, I wanted to see the collision, so I kept my eyes on her pink and yellow, rig and jumpsuit; after all, it would be my last sight. Ironically, I thought about that joke about the bug hitting the car, and what's the last thing that goes through its mind on hitting the windshield... its' asshole. My life had been reduced to a bug joke.

Concurrently, an absurd memory floated up, where I recalled people saying, that in auto crashes, drunks are frequently not injured, due to the fact that the alcohol made them relax. As a result, as my chute was probably starting to bellow, instead of tightening all my muscles, I voluntarily relaxed them, a fraction of a second before the chute grabbed the air. This moronic decision was a mistake. It's uncanny how a sudden simple, seemingly reasonable and harmless decision, can have such an adverse repercussion. The sudden high speed opening of the chute produced the shock of a bomb blast. Being head-down, my cranium

became like a lead weight tied onto the tip of a wipe, being cracked. The most disconcerting aspect of this opening was that I could actually hear my neck bones breaking. The chute opening stretched my neck and then it rebounded. This may seem odd, but the sound was reminiscent of snapping kindling, and pool balls clacking together. It set-up a weird little vibration in my neck. At the very moment of the opening, when I was still looking down, and watched the girl slowly slide horizontally barely beneath my face... just a pink and yellow blur, shooting past the tip of my nose. I'd come within inches of plowing into her. During all of this, she was yet looking down and had never seen me, dropping down from above. She remained completely unaware of the near miss, or of the damage she'd inflicted upon my neck, by ignoring the cardinal rule of not following the plane. Today, the memory of her passing beneath me seems only like a vague hallucination.

Perhaps, had I kept my neck and back muscles tight, I might not have broken my neck. Maybe just the muscles would have been ripped, but the cervical bones might have remained intact. Once the chute was open, I was instantly yanked into a head-up and feet-down position.

Miraculously, the ‘zero-p’ {zero permeability... no air passes through} fabric of my old chute didn’t rip, even with the explosive high speed opening. I quickly raised my head to check that the chute, and I was able to move my neck. Oddly enough, after hearing my neck break, and raising my head to look up didn’t hurt, at least at first it didn’t. Yet then, I tried to raise my hands to grab my toggles. The toggles are simply nylon loops, velcroed to the risers going up toward the chute, and used for steering and flaring the chute. Shockingly my arms and hands didn’t respond! They refused to grab the toggles. In fact, none of my four appendages moved, not even slightly! I tried making a bicycling movement with my legs, but my legs only hung motionless below me! I was completely paralyzed from the neck down! Needless to say, panic struck with a harsh and deadly seriousness! *Holy shit, I’m fuck’n paralyzed!* From the neck down nothing moved, while I was still approximately 6000 to 7000 feet in the sky! *I’m so fucked!*

Over and over, I desperately tried to raise my hands to grab the steering toggles, and to kick my legs, but nothing moved, not even my fingers or toes! Fear and panic flooded in and fogged my mind, as I

slowly glided through the cloud. At one instant, I recalled that my youngest uncle had spent nearly his entire adult life in a wheelchair, and I had always thought that I would rather have been dead, than be in his situation. *Maybe this is payback for hitting Captain Ahab with the water balloons and breaking his neck.* After ten or twenty-seconds of repeatedly trying to raise my arms and kick my legs, suddenly my four appendages responded, and everything was back online. *I'll never skydive, again!* Of course, that was a huge lie.

Back over the drop zone, I made a soft landing, collapsed my chute, braided the lines, and laid down on my back atop the parachute, out in the middle of the DZ's big grassy field. The plane landed and taxied passed me, only thirty feet away. The pilot looked out his side window at me, no doubt wondering why I was laying there. Apparently the opening, which had broken my neck, had just shocked my spinal cord, rather than severing it, or doing any huge amount of permanent damage. The aforementioned enduring damage is minimal. At first, the pain in my neck and shoulders wasn't too bad, but over the next few days, it worsened considerably.

After a few minutes of being motionless, laying

in the field, I got up and handed \$20 (the cost of the jump) to Holly, the new beautiful manifest girl, then went to my car and drove home. By-the-way, Holly is so wonderful, she's like pure sweetness and light. Once home, I swallowed three ten year old muscle relaxers, and went to sleep. Luckily, those pills hadn't deteriorated. It wasn't till the next day, that I got the x-rays done... a slipped disc and two fractured vertebrae. Surgery was suggested, but I didn't have insurance, so for four months, I endured mind bending pain. It was nearly constant, never really stopping and just when it became completely intolerable, it would seem to move or shift locations. It rotated from the front of the right shoulder, to underneath the right shoulder blade, then up into the right armpit. The pain would again start its three-location-rotation over, again and again for four solid months! One of the worst aspects of the pain was thinking that it was permanent. A life of constant pain isn't worth living. You're just a skin-covered lump of misery.

Pain is why many people are afraid of not believing... that burning forever thing. Pain will make people a believer. Pain can make many people turn on their own family. It will make you do almost

anything to escape it. More than once, I thought about buying illegal narcotics. And as mentioned early in these books, there is no greater pleasure than relief from unrelenting pain, unless it's getting over the suicidal depression caused by alcohol withdrawals, the death of a loved one, or perhaps unbearable shame. Pain, grief, and shame are all only brain circuits firing. There are two spots in the thalamus of the brain (the thalamus is in the center of the brain and sort of looks like two small pecans stuck together), which if you discreetly burned (ablated) them out with an electrode, it would stop pain from reaching the cortex. Said surgery might spell the end to chronic pain, but if perfected, big Pharma and the *AMA* would lose lots of money.

Never did I tell the errant pretty young skydiver, what she'd done by ignoring the cardinal rule of following the plane. Instead, I requested that one of the drop-zone instructors talk to her seriously about not following the plane, yet I didn't even tell him either about my neck. Instead, I just said it was a close call, a near miss. For some reason, the idea of keeping my broken neck a secret, made me feel stronger, and oddly enough keeping the secret seemed to help heal my neck. Foolish as it may be,

by not mentioning it, it's as if to say that I still had some control over the pain, and it felt good not to put the burden on the careless girl. In a way, it was similar to the power I experienced, by keeping my previous secrets.

Though I went through a few months worth of teeth-grinding pain, the agony is now mostly gone. Acupuncture proved palliative and kept me from losing my marbles. Generally, I rely only on western medicine to cure my ills. But in that particular situation, the only things western medicine offered were pain pills and surgery. I never liked the idea of addiction, nor was I too keen on the idea of surgery. When I went to the acupuncturist, I had very little faith that it would actually help, but during the first treatment, the pain magically vanished, then returned about three months later, but the second acupuncture treatment again removed it, and it's been largely gone for years now. After the two treatments the pain was permanently reduced by about 98%, with just the occasional flareup. Since then, I've tried acupuncture for other ailments, but without benefit.

The acupuncturist, who helped me, was a little woman, named Moony 'Moon-child' Farris, a

redheaded hippie with a true desire to heal. She loves an ex-Navy 'phantom' pilot, who is a good and brilliant man, but like most Navy fighter pilots has a massive ego. Instead of using the typical needles on me, she used two electro-needles, or E-stim devices. Being in constant pain made me repeatedly think about, how I had taken a pain-free life for granted. Thank the Lord for Moony and her electro-acupuncture. She didn't even want to be paid, but I paid her. Basically, she saved my life for \$100. I paid her \$100 for a life without pain. Western medicine wanted me on pills, followed-up with surgery, then on pills again to deal with the pain of the surgery. The vertebrae healed on their own, but the disc is still not positioned properly, so I'm afraid to let a chiropractor touch my neck.

It wasn't but a few weeks later, that the girl, who'd made the mistake of following the plane, simply stopped skydiving. Perchance at some level, she had realized that it was best for all concerned. Likewise, the valium-consuming Kathy, who jumped the tornado with Tim and me, just faded from the sport. Not everyone is made to be a skydiver. Maybe, I probably wasn't either, but foolishly I didn't let my lack of talent stop me. Having watched many

outstanding jumpers, I think I just barely qualified to be your basic slightly below average skydiver. Many of the guys, who jumped had thousands of jumps, and had started as teenagers, whereas I was over fifty five, when I first started.

My brief experience with the neck-down paralysis was an eye opener. Surviving the incident was like being granted eternal youth, or being given a get-out-of-hell pass. After the close call, little things didn't bother me as much. Who cares if some yo-yo doesn't pull away from the red light quickly enough? So what if the waitress gets the order wrong? Who cares if the hot water tank goes belly-up? So what, if the market dropped thirty percent? It's funny how I had to get the crap scared out of me, to begin to better appreciate what a miracle life is. Fear and pain are the little mind killers, which force you to reshuffle your priorities.

Sometimes when falling through the sky, the rest of life seems a bit washed-out. By simply recalling a few of my skydiving episodes, the old adrenal glands react, and there's a bit of that high, again! Most mothers like recalling the day their baby was born, and most guys enjoy recalling things that make them squirt adrenaline, or something else.

When I returned to the drop zone, it wasn't long before I had yet another close call. One day, instead of jumping with the group of skydivers, I'd decided to jump out first, rollover on my back, and watch the show of the other jumpers exiting the plane, doing their formation flying. Since I was falling with my back toward the earth, I had rested both my hands on my chest, and so my altimeter was on my left wrist, where I could easily glance down at it to check my altitude.

Falling through the clear blue sky on my back, watching my friends, grabbing each others ankles, wrists, suit grips, to move from one position to the next, was a pleasant experience. While falling in the back-down position, I kept checking my altimeter to make sure I was at a safe altitude. All my friends doing the formation flying were pro jumpers, and so tended to open their chutes around two thousand feet above the ground. My altitude was a thousand feet below theirs.

Suddenly I saw that they were throwing-out (deploying) their chutes, but my altimeter said that I was still at seven thousand feet altitude. *Why are they opening-up so high? Could something have happened?* But the problem was that my altimeter had

malfunctioned! What I didn't know was that, when you are falling at 120 mph on your back, and the air whips around you, there is a vacuum created on your chest. Said vacuum is called a 'burble,' and the altimeter will not function properly in the burble. Quickly flipping over to the belly-to-earth position, I saw the ground fast rushing up; simultaneously I deployed my chute, but as mentioned my chute then required nine hundred to one thousand feet of falling before it opens, so I was right at the limit. I kept my eyes open, looking at the ground, determined to experience the last second of life. *It'll be so fast I won't feel it!* Obviously, the chute opened at the last second.

It's funny what goes through your frontal lobes, when father-time starts clutching at your throat. I fully believed I was going to hit, but when the chute opened, what went through my mind was disappointment that the chute had opened. Skydiving can be a bit like a mind-altering drug, and just as addicting.



BELLA'S MURDER

By the time Bella had been gruesomely murdered, I'd worked on roughly two dozen criminal cases. For most of those cases, I did my best to remain anonymous, and had pretty well succeeded. In those days before terrorists and prior to locking-up so many of our citizens, anyone could simply walk into the *Sheriff's Department*, walk up the stairs to investigations, pick-out an investigator, talk to him, or leave him note. In the 70s, 80s, and early 90s, you

didn't have to show an ID to get into the police station. The investigators were usually just sitting in small groups, talking about weird or funny things they seen or heard about in their dealings. Few would actually be working. They did occasionally work, but generally it was more like a group of good ole boys chewing the fat about: women, shooting, camping, fishing, ridiculous things they's seen black people, and criminals, do, booze, and food. If I'd been more prudent, I'd have always remained anonymous. After uncovering the guilty party, I'd usually just phone in the information to investigations, speaking to whichever investigator happened to answer the phone, first. However, with a few of the cases, I worked briefly with a couple detectives at the *Mobile County Sheriff's Department*, using my real name. Generally, I liked to switch detectives, and use a different name, since I never really trusted any of them. The detectives I meant, were primarily interested in just finding anyone they could justifiably arrest, regardless of the person's actual guilt. Often they are too aggressive, paranoid, and untrusting, but most likely, they're not nearly as bad as I am. Many of them were the loyal cat's paw of various well connected people, and that particular fact may have had a lot to do with their being

promoted to detective.

Besides working on the criminal cases, at times, I've also tried to imagine how to commit crimes, like terrorism, but with no intention of carrying-out the crimes, but for the purpose of preventing such crimes... figure out how to do something new and disastrous, so that the authorities might prevent it from actually happening. Why wait for the crime to happen? To do this, I'd simply pretend I was a terrorist and imagine how to kill lots of people, without getting caught. A couple of times, I did figured how to do so. Ergo, one day I contacted the *FBI* to explain how to perform a heinous crime, by passing all forms of security, so that they (national security) could better guard against someone actually carrying it out. Perchance, you could call this kind of preventative thinking, prophylactic criminology. Of course, my contacting them, caused certain agents to immediately suspect me of wanting to actually commit the crime. As a consequence, they asked me if I intended to carry-out the crime, rather than thanking me for cluing them in. In fact, neither did I receive any thanks from any of the investigators at the *Sheriff's Department*. My response to the *FBI's* paranoia, was to simply ask them, "Do you really

think I would have told you how to do that, if I intended to do it, myself?" Law enforcement personnel generally lack the ability to say, 'thank you.' Nevertheless, solving or stopping crime is its own reward. You've no doubt noticed, that I haven't divulged the aforementioned terrorist transgression, but suffice it to say, it was a big crime, a means by which kill hundreds of people, while right under the noses of security.

Another plan was how to eliminate an entire culture of peoples, without committing any violence, without using a bomb or bullets... not a single weapon. In fact, you don't actually kill them, but they in fact no longer exist. Millions of people, who form that culture, would literally disappear. A creative moment can sometimes be like a curse. After the meeting in the Behavioral Science Building with the chess club and the discussion about the immune suppressing virus, I've learned to not publicly discuss dangerous ideas. The more arrogant parts of the brain receive a high from such thinking. I can only imagine what it's like for a high level psychopath.

I kept the number of my appearances inside the *Mobile County Sheriff's Department* to a bare minimum, and if I did enter the building, I'd try to

keep the visit down to a one-on-one and brief. Most of the time, I preferred to simply phone-in the information, or to meet the investigator somewhere away from the *MCSD*, usually at a fast food place, or unless they were in their uniform; in which case, I'd meet them at an unpopulated open air park, or in a large parking lot.

Back then, if I wanted to meet-up with a detective, it was easy. I'd simply call dispatch, and tell them that I wanted to meet with detective such-and-such, in reference to such-and-such case, at some place and time, and that I had some useful information. If dispatch wanted my name, I'd give a fake name, and they'd promise to relay the info. They always did, but the detective didn't always show, yet about ninety percent of the time, they did. Nobody loves free info quite like detectives, unless that info incriminates some influential person, which they too often looked-out for, and believe you me, there are more than a few cops, who show far more loyalty to certain rich folks, than they do to the law.

But some detective in charge of a certain case was squeamish about meeting someone, they didn't know, and so at times, I had to enter the concrete bunker of a police station, a couple of blocks south of

Canal Street. Since I carried no ID and used a fake name, but my car tag would have been a dead giveaway, I'd leave my car parked about a mile away, where I knew there were no cameras. If it had been needed my escape plan was simple... tell the overly curious investigator that I needed to use the bathroom, and dart outside. Back then, I could cover one mile in just over five minutes. Each day, I'd run six miles in thirty-six miles, then train for a half hour on the heavy bag, every other day.

The only cases I worked on were: murder, abused kids, men who'd beaten or raped women, or theft from old people. I didn't care about bank robbery, embezzlement, drugs, fraud, etc. I did so enjoy working on mysteries. They were fun, because they imparted a sense of accomplishment, a feeling of having done something good. There were many cases, and I've forgotten most of them. If only I had my maternal Grandfather's recall. While I enjoyed working to help solve crimes, it was clear that a fair number of the cops were not to be trusted. The old maxim about cops and criminals being cut from the same cloth, is more accurate than most people might imagine. The reason most honest right wing conservatives don't agree with that is because they

just, being truthful people, can't appreciate how good cops can be at lying, and covering their tracks. No one can look as innocent as a dirty cop! Back then, it seemed to me that good and bad cops are about fifty-fifty, or maybe slightly worse. Perhaps, that's what a job for low pay, fraught with high levels of danger and disrespect, gets you; ergo, the other old maxim, that you get what you pay for, is fairly accurate.

Many cops find themselves in potentially deadly situations with insufficient back-up. Some police are basically good people, others not, and so in those situations the outcomes vary widely.

Dr. M.A. Worley

The entire Mobile police force, made-up of five to six hundred cops, seemed to be bitterly divided into countless rival factions. It didn't seem to be too dissimilar from Mexico City, with its various warring street gangs. And, like the gangs members, there were many dangerous and evil, as well as good and honorable cops. Moreover, amongst the MC street-gangs, there were men with tremendous courage and loyalty, as there were amidst the cops.

City gangs might viciously protect their

territorial rights, and generally respected those of another group. Cops also tended to be divided into gangs, but with each cop-gang not respecting anything, about another intra-agency gang. In that respect cops could be more dangerous than street gangs. When a street gang's sovereign rights were violated by another gang, violence generally ensued, but it was not too common, even though I'd been involved in such a confrontation. Between the various factions of cops, the amount of outright overt violence was much less than with the street gangs. Nevertheless, the surreptitious political infighting was fairly savage, and more than merely time consuming. Many cops seemed to devote more time and energy to political intradepartmental infighting, than they did to actually fighting crime.

The inability of the cops to get along, with factions of their fellow officers, probably did more to reduce the performance of Mobile's law-enforcement, than did anything else, including crime and budget-cuts included. There was no such thing as a cop that got along with most of the other cops. An officer, who got along with even twenty percent of his fellow police officers was considered a skilled plenipotentiary, a conciliator of immense

proportions, a peacemaker.

It was an understatement to say that many of the police got along better with certain of the criminal element, than with certain of their fellow officers. Only the shooting of a cop could momentarily unify the police factions, but shortly after that event, they'd be back to their infighting. That may not be too dissimilar from the way that certain gangs will momentarily strike an accord, against the police, or against a third street gang. The parallels between the cops and the gangs were many and notable. A small percentage of the cops were simply legal versions of Quinto, the aforementioned black king of Tepito, in Mexico City.

If need be, some of the razor sharp stainless steel police egos could slice right through any and all jurisprudence. Of course, jurisprudence is but one of many philosophies, all groping to manage society, and each created by various feeble lumps of gray mush, with each lump knowing that their way is the best way. In an odd sort of way, the dramatic stress, which every cop sustained, from the malevolent battle of internal politics, and disagreeable citizens, may have been the real high of their job... the near constant conflict, ensuring a dependable adrenaline

release, ergo circumventing the boredom of a humdrum life.

Both cops and gangsters seem to enjoy lives of dissension. Some people prefer swilling their adrenaline from the fountain of: political friction, internal investigations, dealing with criminals, intradepartmental conflicts, gang conflicts, etc., all of which help to keep the adrenaline flowing. Furthermore, racial issues tended to be ever present in the *Mobile Sheriff's Department*, and if current national news reports are accurate, they still are. Likewise, gangs tended to be composed of one race or culture, either: hispanic, black, white, asian, etc., and that pretty well holds true, today. Like I said, the parallels between cops and gangsters are many.

Bella's twenty-four year old, beaten, and mutilated body had been found face-down in a small isolated clump of two foot tall grass amongst a stand of straight pine trees, not but thirty feet off the road. She was discovered by a red-headed six year old boy, who'd just gotten off his school bus. He was walking to his house, when he had smelled her corpse in the very early stages of decomposition. He didn't know what the smell was, and so he'd simply followed his nose about forty yards, from where the bus dropped

him off. There he looked into long grass. Her petite pale naked blood-smeared body was out in the rural countryside, just off county road 17, about twenty miles north of Mobile. Those ghastly color crime scene photos were cold and depressing, to say the least. If you are murdered, your body is destined to endure a list of insults, with photos being the least pernicious, and the autopsy topping the list. *Wonder what the six year old thought about seeing her smelly nude bloody body?* It couldn't have been a pleasant familiar sight. I didn't know the area, so when I was told about the location, I didn't fully take it on board. My brain simply logged it as being somewhere out in the country. Later, I'd have to go to the newspaper and read the article to determine the body's location.

Bella's small hands, with her nails tipped in a chipped garish purplish nail polish, were still tied behind her back, with what looked like thin cotton clothesline. The chords had bitten too deep into the soft white skin of her swollen tender wrists. Her hands were much darker, than her forearms. Each digit possessed a deep crimson hue on the last phalange. The edema was almost like she'd dipped the ends of her child-like fingers in carmine ink, to somewhat match her nail polish. At the time, I

wondered if that was normal, considering the circumstance.

Covering her body were very large painful looking dark bluish bruises, the size of salad plates, so graphic in color that they made her tiny tracks marks seem completely insignificant, but there was the true genesis of her painful demise. The colorful bruises clearly meant that she'd probably been savagely beaten, while still alive, before mercifully dying, but perhaps not for a day or two. Her medium length brown hair was greasy looking and pinched into the base of her skull by her tied panty hose, which appeared to have been used to gag her. She was face down in the long grass, where it was easy to see that a fair amount of blood was covering the inside of her thighs, and was smeared up and over better than half of her bare bubble backside. There was a small lightened circular shape in the blood, in the very center of each of her butt cheeks, indicating that briefly she'd been on her back post-mortem. Perchance, she died on her back, and maybe while looking into the eyes of the monster, who then dumped her body in the clump of woods.

The autopsy in scientific terms said that she had been cruelly beaten with a large heavy blunt object,

which had not only created the bruises, but had broken several ribs, a collarbone, and one shoulder blade, engendering massive amounts of internal bleeding. Her ruptured spleen had nearly killed her, due to internal hemorrhages, but it was most probably the broken beer bottle, which had been repeatedly and painfully inserted in her young vagina, which ended her suffering, allowing the young girl to bleed out. The coroner said that it was impossible to tell if she'd been raped, since the amount of vaginal bleeding could have washed-out the sperm. The killer could have used a condom. Nevertheless, no sperm was found.

Legal justice is an orchestrated miasma of revenge, supposedly to protect society, where there's generally a money grab involved?

The Nature of Crime and Punishment by Leo R. I. Wamsley

The big glossy colored crime photos showed her body from different angles. In two of the photos, you could see that the lethal long neck *Lone Star* beer bottle was still embedded, with its dark brown glass

base protruding between her thighs and butt cheeks. *The little kid off the school bus probably saw this!* This thought caused me to recall going to the bloody bull fights, and witnessing the machine gunning of the two teenagers, as a child. Another photo showed the broken and bloody bottle standing alone on the coroner's stainless steel table. The spiky bloody broken neck was a true horror to contemplate, but only for a second or two. Those gruesome thoughts made me wonder how much terror and pain poor Bella had been forced to endure, before the grim reaper mercifully snatched her away from that hell on earth, away from the monster. *She probably was happy to die.* Those photos also made me think about the mind of the killer. He had to have derived joy from the butchery, but I too enjoyed the gore of the bull fights, but I never could have enjoyed what he did. Apparently, the killer wanted the police to see the bottle, to know just how brutal and cruel he could be... no real attempt to hide the body. *What evil!* The bottle yielded no fingerprints, so maybe the killer wore gloves. The bloody bottle was in a plastic bag in the evidence room. I wonder where it is now?

For several days after, the memories of that autopsy and those photos kept popping-up in my

mind's eye. I'd find myself thinking about what the ghastly minutes, before her death, might have been like... tied-up with a sadistic brutal monster wailing away on you with some heavy blunt object, for a couple of days, and then painfully shoving a broken bottle inside an extremely sensitive cavity. *Death is bad enough in a hospital, when sailing along on morphine!* Bella's agony no doubt had to have been incredible, and the horror she was forced to experience defied imagination... poor baby! She looked to be no more than five feet tall.

As you probably have guessed, Bella happened to be a prostitute. And so, few if any at the *Mobile Sheriff's Department* seemed to care about the simple fact that the girl's neurology registered pain, and probably just as fully as anyone else did, or that the parts of her young mind, which represented fear, were made of the same standard gray mush. The cops didn't care about her, because she was of no social standing. But, suffering is suffering, regardless of one's morality, social standing, political preference, religion, intelligence, race, etc.! Suffering is more than just human. *How have the cops dismissed Bella's agony, because she was a hooker?* I've never understood that kind of thinking. Those prostitutes,

who don't care got their health, are those who are desperate for drugs, and so are to be pitied, not castigated. For many, life without the drug is a virtual neurological impossibility, unless a life of pure misery is considered living. Only assholes can hate such damaged women. For some reason, its often the self-made people or the military, who seem to be the most judgmental. They frequently fail to realize that the success they chalk-up to the sweat of their brow, usually has a lot less to do with their hard work, than they realize! Pride is a bitch. Why else the constant need for a scapegoat? And, if they're highly intelligent people, they often don't appreciate that some people are on the left side of the bell curve, and that some people are born with a marked attenuation of the part of the brain, which represents motivation. Unfortunately, people are not all equal, but so what? All people need a measure of respect and justice.

Didn't the Jew, named Jesus, love Mary Magdalene, just like he supposedly loved the rest of humanity, maybe even the money lenders? Perhaps, Jesus was ill informed about prostitutes. Possibly you might be thinking that his mother didn't raise him right. But, the Mobile police certainly knew better.

They would have known that Jesus was ridiculous for associating with a hooker. Likewise, most of Mobile's Southern Baptist community, are of the same mind as the police on things like that. While working on that case, many was the time I'd hear the phrase... "She is (or was) nothing but a fucking whore." To me the facial expressions, and the forced tones and volume of the words 'nothing' and 'fucking' were the most interesting aspects of that overworked phrase. Another popular phrase was, "Well, that's what she gets!" As mentioned, too many people just need a good scapegoat, to justify their own weird little life.

Talking with a detective, there appeared to be no viable clues as to who had brutally killed Bella. He speculated that she'd been murdered somewhere in the city, probably close to the 'whore-stroll,' tortured in basement for a couple of days, then driven out into the country to be dumped in the clump of woods. Bella's mother had identified the body, and then the mother was taken to the nearest hospital to receive some psychiatric medication. Apparently the mother had mental problems long before Bella's death, and her child's passing was too much for her. The mother had once been into voodoo, when she had lived southeast of New Orleans. Some folks

thought that voodoo was why she was schizophrenic, and others thought it was the other way around. The truth of the matter is that schizophrenia has nothing to do with voodoo, and voodoo is about as real as Santa Claus.

At that time, it was rumored that about 17% of the people in Louisiana practiced voodoo. There were about four million people in the state, so that meant about 680,000 were into practicing Santeria. That makes sense when you think about the fact that of the fifty states Louisiana is near the bottom for education. I'd meant several voodoo practitioners, when I went to New Orleans to buy my drugs in the early 70s. They were always overly serious and full of themselves, and nothing more than cheap cons and relatively ignorant people. This is not to say, they they weren't evil and dangerous.

When the coroner finally released the body, the mother had Bella cremated. She had saved the ashes, and some time later, sprinkled them in two strategic places, with one location being more than slightly bizarre.

Once while skydiving, at a distraught daughter's request, we attempted to spread her father's ashes over the southern Alabama countryside from an

altitude of 16,000 feet. The ashes were in a tin coffee can with a yellow pullback plastic lid. We made the mistake of opening the coffee can, before jumping out, so half the ashes got caught by the prop wash and blew back into the plane. The other half were sucked out the door. Several of us, ended-up inhaling some ashes. We were violently coughing, as we fell through the air. Human ashes are not like cigarette ashes, they're a bit more durable and chunky; tougher on the eyes, nose, and the respiratory tree.

Most of the police were betting on Bella's heroin-dealing pimp, Jackson, as the likely murderer. But they weren't exactly putting much effort into the investigation; after all, Bella was a hooker and a junkie. Consequently, she was considered to be subhuman, and not worthy of their efforts. While Jackson could probably kill, if the need arose, he wouldn't be the kind to beat someone to death, much less use that ugly broken beer bottle in such a sadistic manner. It was difficult enough to believe Jackson was a heroin dealer.

Jackson was neither tall nor powerfully built, but instead was a short black man, and a little on the pudgy side. He didn't wear fancy pimp clothes, or drive a fancy car, and seemed remarkably quiet and

easy going. Still, Jackson was what you might call a 'wanta-be' pimp; in that, he used drugs to control his women, rather than his physical and sexual prowess, which other pimps typically employed. Female addicts would do just about anything for a heroin fix, ergo even someone like Jackson could be a pimp. While he dealt heroin, he didn't use it, and the drug provided him with his small stable of girls, and his rep as a pimp, as well as a fair amount of cash. As a result, some called him 'The Needle Dick Pimp,' or just 'Needle Dick.'

To be an effective heroin dealer, all you really needed was to be reasonably smart, unconcerned about destroying peoples' lives, and willing to pull the trigger, if threatened; no need for an extensive resume, with job experience, education, letters of recommendation, or massive amounts of muscle or brains. It helps, if you can be mildly convivial, because if you generate too much fear, people might look for another dealer, or just shoot and rob you. Perhaps that's why Jackson was so good at dealing. He looked friendly and completely harmless, but his looks were deceiving, when it came to his heroin. Nevertheless, Bella was not a danger to Jackson, nor to his business, just the opposite. Nevertheless, I

went to see Jackson.

He rented a dilapidated three bedroom two bath house, not too far from the Jewish graveyard where Black had worked as a grave digger, in my youth. It was after twelve when I got there, but his girls were still sleeping, so we had the living room to ourselves. Needle Dick was surprisingly easy to talk with, and seemed relaxed and anything but guilty of Bella's murder. To my way of thinking, someone else had killed Bella. He was as curious as I was and it wasn't a phony type of curiosity. Jackson made a few comments meant to indicate that Bella's murder might have been orchestrated as a warning to him, but after he elaborated on that theory, it didn't seem to hold water. I left feeling that Needle Dick was not Bella's killer, and he hadn't a decent clue about who killed her.

Since Bella had been a longtime (five years) prostitute, it was only logical to begin by questioning the local hookers. After five years of straight hooking, most prostitutes have racked-up enough misdemeanors and one or two drug-related felonies, that they're eligible for an all-expense-paid retirement at some up-market prison, and since many prostitutes are in dire need of rehab, and are often

lesbians, what more could they hope for? In Alabama, there's an habitual offender statue for misdemeanors, so if the hookers gets too many low level crimes, she can be locked away for a long time. Needle Dick has suggested that I begin my investigation by looking for a hooker named Nay-Nay, and he gave me a description of her, and told me where she hung-out.

Driving out to Mobile's famous 'whore stroll,' circa the Tillman's corner area, the sun was just settling beneath the horizon, when I spotted a buxom young blond wearing a pair of light blue ultra-tight cut-off cotton short shorts, and an extremely small man's white strap T-shirt, struggling to accomplish the near impossible task of containing a substantial pair of bodacious breasts, and since a cool breeze had just kicked-up, the thin fabric nicely displayed the pair of hard thimble-sized extra-chewy nipples. Without attempting subterfuge, and with the upmost courtesy, I introduced myself and merely told the woman the truth; that I wasn't a cop, but was trying to help them find Bella's killer.

There was no point in trying to bullshit a master bullshitter. Besides, while everyone appreciates honesty, prostitutes especially do, since they live in a

world which trades largely in lies, and so the truth can shine like a full moon, low on the horizon on a clear cool night, after a city-wide power outage. When I got done with my explanation, and telling her what Needle Dick had told me, she spoke right up.

The moon will guide you through the night with her brightness, but she will always dwell in the darkness, in order to be seen.

Shannon L. Alder

“Well, I am so very pleased to meet you, Mr. Joey, honey. Yes... I be Nay-Nay. {Oddly, she gazed at her breast as she spoke her own name.} Yeah baby, I knew poor Bella. She was a real good girl... for real... but I sure don't know what happened to that dear girl. She was sweet. I mean you know a lotta people don't think that a junkie can be sweet, but Bella really was. You know Baby, if you want to meet more people, who knew Bella, you should go with me to Tommy's party, tonight. You can be my date, if you like. I heard her body was pretty messed-up. Jesus, a broken beer bottle, and all. Is that really true? That shit really sucks! How about it, honey? You up for taken me to a party, tonight?” She uttered

this proposal, while she again seductively glanced down at her extra-large hard protruding nipples, then she grinned. She knew the ancient erotic game.

“That party does sound like a good place to start, Nay-Nay. Let’s, you and I go, sweetie. I can always use a good party. Who’d you say is throwing the party?”

“Pretty Tommy is. He’s a real fine pimp, and has lots of food and booze at his parties. He’s the one that drives that beautiful black Lincoln with them cat’s eye headlights, big wire-spoked wheels, red leather inside, and the shiny chrome thing over top the windshield. Tommy got the best ride and best game on the stroll. Lots of different kinds of people will be there. You’ll like him, because he’s the only pimp that gets the girls off of drugs, instead of giving the shit to them. That’s why Needle Dick hates him. Tommy’s got that much game, baby. Take it from someone who knows, first hand. But the best sex in the world, not even Pretty Tony, is gonna make me give up my hard-earned cash. Still, I do love sex. But, Tommy can forget me joining his stable. You know that’s why he invited me, tonight. He wants to try to recruit me, but you being my date will help me keep his hate’n wives off my fine white ass. Not bad for a

white girl, huh?” She made the last comment, as she turned slightly, raising her right hip, smiling, and gesticulating toward her well formed butt.

Smiling in return, I nodded agreement. She was bragging, but she wasn't lying. It was hard to stay focused on the job at hand. She knew I felt her, and like me, she liked it, and so she ramped-up the sex talk.

“I hope you don't mind such, but I do like the occasional female, and Tommy has this one fine Asian bitch, who I wouldn't mind being with, especially with Pretty Tommy in the bed! You might want to be with her, too. You like bi-girls, baby?” She asked. *What a loaded question!*

“All guys like the idea of two women, but then you know that, or you wouldn't be asking, with that pretty grin on your face. When and where should I pick you up, tonight? How should I dress... tuxedo and tails?”

Nay-Nay gave me the details. At nine sharp, I picked her up from her apartment, and she was dressed to the nines: black patent leather six inch heels, tight jeans, and a see-through black silk blouse, nicely complimented with no bra, just a firm

bounce, ‘with big points sit’n way up high.’ Her make-up looked professionally done, and her hair was in a thick french roll, which made her huge eyes pop, but I suspected that the reason she looked so good wasn’t me, but for the Asian woman and Petty Tommy.

Pretty Tommy lived in the only suite of a fairly low-rent 1950s cinderblock motel, located barely off the stroll, and though the outside of his place looked abysmal, the inside was fairly nice. Since it was on the end and under a large breezeway, it accessed the big backyard complete with palm trees. Tommy was a tall black man with a long ropey frame, an easy smile, with an understated handshake, who amazingly had once been an E-4 electronics tech, in the US Navy. He’d worked at Torrey Station, in San Carlos, Florida, on some fairly sensitive communication gear. His real name was Samuel Kilson Culpeper. It boggled my mind to think that a man, who’d once had a top secret clearance, had become a successful well known pimp; talk about a major career change! Supposedly, his ancestors had originally come from Africa in the 1690s, and worked on a plantation as field slaves, hence the white surname.

Tommy's five hooker-wives acted as the party hostesses; were seriously hot, and charming, and so, lots of fun. They'd plainly had plenty of practice at entertaining. The oldest was twenty-nine and the youngest nineteen. Prostitution is definitely a young woman's sport. The reason for this is probably owing to the fact that the male brain learns beauty in his youth, and male genetics says that the young adult female physiology is most appropriate for baring children, ergo, the man's brain is programed to equate the appearance of a mature young woman in terms of sex. To the best of my knowledge, wet dreams never contain a pair of saggy wrinkly boobs. Fertility equates with firm breast and butt development, and so by default, beauty is perceived as the young fully developed adult female. Once the male has learned that certain phenotypic characteristics represent beauty, he's basically incapable of changing his appreciation, just because he's gotten older. For many males, beauty is a matter of hard wiring. Let's face it, there are not to many forty or fifty something years old Miss Universe contestants. The oldest winner of all time was Elizabeth "Bette" Cooper-Moore, at the ripe old age of twenty-seven.

Contrary to the teachings of Hollywood, Mother Nature has created the male sexual brain to prefer the appearance of the younger women, regardless of his own advanced age. This idea wouldn't sell books or screen plays, but it's largely the truth. Part of this situation is owing to the fact that beauty itself is inevitably ephemeral, for males and females. Contemplate the fact that the sex drive in the male is largely driven biochemically by testosterone, which reduces with age. Consequently, beauty becomes more important for the older male to acquire sexual interest, yet society and Hollywood feel that the older male, should be sexually attracted to correspondingly older women, but alas, sexual arousal is not under voluntary control. Should the older male sexually desire a younger woman, then he's frequently considered to be the proverbial 'dirty old man.' Granted, for good company and conversation the older woman, with more life experience, is usually preferable, but let's face it, sex is not an intellectual endeavor, and I'm not saying old guys should date young women; I'm just pointing-out one of Mother Nature's mean little tricks.

The twenty-five year old was Tommy's number

one wife and had been with him the longest... six years. Their relationship beat 99.9 percent of the marriages I've seen. Her name was Yuki, a gorgeous Eurasian with a real head on her shoulders. She was great with math, and seemed to be a repository of obscure arcane facts. Like the fact that the gestation period of a pig is about three months, three weeks, and three days. She was all about trivia, but her looks were anything but trivial.

Coming from poverty and an abusive dad, Yuki had decided early in her teens that being a high-end hooker was the fastest way to fill her pockets, and escape her unpleasant penniless past. Unlike the other wives, Yuki kept most of her earnings, and invested in conservative dividend stocks, and no load, tax-free, AAA muni-bonds. Tommy demanded thirty percent, for which he provided: legendary sexual satisfaction, interesting and humorous conversation, a modicum of genuine affection, transportation, protection, bail money, condoms, and if need be, a lawyer. *I've now known a Tommy, who was a gigolo, and another who is a pimp.* If you grow-up in poverty, money generally becomes your god, and you don't even realize it, because you tend to think that everyone's pretty much like yourself...

focused on money.

Yuki refused to work the more dangerous areas on the street. Instead, Tommy drove her around to the expensive bars, hotels, and casinos in Mobile, Biloxi, New Orleans, Pensacola, Fort Walton, and even as far east as Destin, Florida. He'd get her a room and he'd generally rent the adjoining room to furtively shadow her. Much of her allure was owing to her keen intelligence, and the beautiful blend of her two races. Yuki's incontrovertible canniness, allowed her to be a master of sexual subtly, erotic innuendo, skillfully orchestrating her profoundly arousing traits. Besides the Eurasian, two of his girls were black and two were white, for a total stable of five.

Through the years, I've unprofessionally concluded that there are four primary reasons that girls work the street. One is to escape poverty. A second is to get money for drugs, and currently, by far the predominant reason. A third motive is because they genuinely enjoy the attentions of a skilled pimp, since many pimps are masters at reading a girl's sexual proclivities, as well as exploiting and satisfying them. The fourth reason is for love, since there are those girls, who fully equate

the sexual prowess of a skilled pimp with actual true love. Many young women equate great sex, and their associated oxytocin release, with actual love. Those poor girls are perhaps honest about their feelings, but none the less, the most self-deceiving. They will usually hate anyone, who tries to convince them of their mistake. While this situation may be somewhat tragic, the prostitute's seemingly hopeless sex-love fantasy doesn't seem to be any more absurd than many marriages. What today, often passes for love and marriage can at times make the prostitute-pimp relationship seem consecrated. After all, one of the most dangerous things a cop can do is to intervene in a domestic dispute.

Tommy's living room window looked-out upon a defunct algae-filled swimming pool, complete with millions of subsurface wiggling mosquito larva. Consequently, all the party guests stayed clear of the pool. Luckily, the mosquitoes hadn't yet gone airborne. The insects are known to carry such diseases as West Nile virus, equine encephalitis, St. Louis encephalitis, La Crosse encephalitis, dengue fever, yellow fever, malaria, Zika, etc. It seems odd, but fortunate indeed, that *HIV* can't live in the mosquito salivary gland, when in fact it does in

human salivary tissue. Perhaps it does, but the viral load is so low it doesn't matter. Some people have hypothesized that mosquito bites may account for some people showing immunity. Oddly enough, some of the above diseases which are transmitted by the mosquito are viruses. Consequently, it might not take too much of a mutation in the mosquito's salivary physiology, or in the virus, to suddenly transform most of the world into being *HIV* positive. That is a terrible thought indeed, that suddenly the *HIV* virus could be transmitted by the mosquito.

Apparently, the scum filled pool hadn't been used in years, and the motel owner, who'd been spending too much money on cocaine, didn't have the cash to hire a pool company, and the Mobile Health Department hadn't bothered to check it out, since the local health inspector was a friend of the motel owner. From time to time, the motel owner and the health inspector split the cost of an eight ball. Rumor had it that Tommy had once kept an alligator in the pool, until one of the city's animal control units had removed it. The swamps just north of Mobile Bay are brimming with gators, so there's no problem with finding one, but if you value your life, avoid the temptation; otherwise, make sure you

take along a roll of duct tape, for their toothy snouts. One of my paperboys had a customer, who was a rodeo cowboy. One day, the cowboy went fishing in the northern part of Mobile Bay, and took the paperboy with him. The kid ran the twenty horse motor and steered the little runabout, wherever the cowboy told him. When a gator showed-up, the cowboy used the anchor line to make a lariat, then he climbed-up on the bow, and threw some bait to the gator. The second time he threw some bait, and the gator's head came out of the water, the cowboy and lassoed the gator by its' thick neck. Once the gator was roped, the cowboy yanked on the line, but the gator, with its' powerful tail immediately pulled back, and the cowboy went overboard. The gator took him down, and the cowboy came back-up minus his left arm. He yelled, 'help,' then the gator took him down for good. The little black boy waited for a few minutes, then found his way back to the boat launch, abandoned the boat with all its' fishing gear, didn't bother taking the cowboy's truck, and hitch-hiked home. The paperboy was black and the cowboy was white, so the death remained a mystery, till I wrote this. In the nineteen seventies, most white males in Mobile were racists, always looking for a reason.

The night sky was filled with bright stars, and the warm salty air, just off the gulf, and it vibrated with beat of the music. The tunes had been selected by Tommy's 'wives,' as well as by some of the various party goers: jazz, soul, rock, early hip-hop, etc. The motel suite itself was large and furnished with mismatched, well worn, yet comfortable furniture. Pretty Tommy had hired one of the Chef's from a local seafood restaurant, *The Salty Inn*, down by the bay. Most of the chef's, I've meant, have been heavy into drugs and/or alcohol, more than a little strange, and while they're often smart, they can be all about drama. Perchance, persons with an enhanced sense of taste are also more likely to possess the addictive gene.

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2009/07/21/the-addicts-in-the-kitchen.html>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/27701408>

There were two large propane fish fryers and three drum grills set-up, under the palms. The menu included steaks, as well as various types of grilled

and fried seafood: grouper, mullet, trigger fish, shrimp, and scallops. There were five washtubs filled with raw oysters on ice, complete with a hired hand shucking fresh oysters, from five big wet burlap sacks covered in ice. Most southern males are crazy about oysters. The various sides included: corn on the cob, baked beans, sweet potatoes with butter and cinnamon, thick jambalaya, and cajun grits. Everyone used paper plates, bowls, and cups, since the pimp and his prostitutes weren't interested in doing dishes. Four large coolers, filled with ice, contained various domestic and imported beers, and the usual mixers. The bar was stocked with several types of rum, vodka, gin, and whiskey, both Irish and Scottish, but no wines. The beautiful shapely bartender worked at a local gentleman's club, as a stripper.

The fifty odd guests were a loud talkative crowd, a mix of: hookers, lawyers, car dealers, the owner of the local dog-track, the owner of the gentleman's club, people from the neighborhood, some of relatives of Tommy's wives, the aforementioned health inspector, the motel owner, and two black reverends, who wore the most jewelry, and drove the nicest cars. A few people were snorting lines, but out in darkness of their cars, since doing drugs was not

allowed in Tommy's place. Evidently what Nay-Nay had said, about Tommy and his no drug policy, was true. He was all about stopping the girls from 'chasing Jason,' pursuing that first great high the drug had originally given them. Supposedly, its like chasing the ghost of a euphoric memory, trying to return the brain to its original level of dopamine, but it can't happen since the dopamine levels, and the ability to synthesize and release dopamine, has been permanently compromised (lowered) by the drug. In a very real way, that first hit on the crack pipe is as good as it ever gets. If you try that drug, you'd better hope that your brain is configured, so that it can return to its normal levels of dopamine, otherwise it's time for a life of misery.

Again, while the drug makes the dopaminergic cells release dopamine, creating the almighty high, each time the individual does the drug, there's a little less dopamine to be released, than the time before, due to the lower functioning of the dopaminergic neurons. Later, when the drug has been metabolized, the dopamine levels are left lower, creating what's called 'craving,' hence along comes addiction and dependency. Lower dopamine means a life with less: pleasure, happiness, and motivation. Regardless of all

the rhetoric, addiction is a relatively simple thing... low brain dopamine. Yes, there are other neurotransmitters involved, but low dopamine, largely represents the craving of addiction. Low 5-HT represents insomnia, and/or reduced sleep.

Addictive drugs, i.e., caffeine, nicotine, booze, heroin, cocaine, barbiturates, benzodiazepines, crack, speeds, etc., are all dopamine releasers, which lower brain dopamine levels over time. The drug which typically does the most dopaminergic attenuation is nicotine, ergo it is the hardest to quit. At least, that's what the National Institute of Drug Abuse claims, but subjectively I think it's heroin. With the hardcore/longterm addict, no matter how long they stay off their chemical of abuse, their brain dopamine level will remain subpar, and so they will never fully feel normal, without their chemical of abuse. They will continue to crave, and continue to feel unmotivated and depressed. The point of mentioning this, is so that you'll understand, that the only way an addict can again feel normal is to just give them their drug. To ask them to abstain is to ask them to remain miserable and depressed. The part of the addict's brain, which gives them the motivation to quit, is the first part of the brain that is damaged by the drug!

Once it's been substantiated that they are indeed an addict, which can't quit, why not just give them their drug? The drugs hardly cost anything to make, and dispense; whereas the drug-related crimes, medical issues, prison costs, crack babies, *DEA* and police costs, *US Coast Guard*, destroyed families, etc., are extreme expensive. Not to mention, the billions of US dollars, going overseas to the drug lords.

At Pretty Tommy's party, there were a lot of joints being passed around, since on the street, ganja is considered harmless, if not therapeutic. For the most part, only right wing Republicans and too many cops, think pot is the gateway drug and should remain illegal, but even many of those folks are changing their mind. Tired of being stupid and unmotivated, I had given-up weed years before, so at the party, I stuck with the food and the *Wild Turkey*. Hard liquor makes me think of my Dad, and my fun-filled childhood, before the withdrawals. I am so accustomed to its taste, that good whiskey usually tastes sweet. On the other hand, cheap whiskey maybe better for medicinal purposes, since it has more bite, to better detour you from over indulging.

Bella's murder was a frequent topic at the party, so I didn't have to be obvious by asking pointed

questions. All I had to do was listen, and interject. While there was a slew of speculation about the murderer, no one seemed to have a bonafide clue. People were just guessing. After a plate of grilled shrimp, jambalaya, and corn on the cob, a couple of hours of socializing, as well as a half dozen whiskeys, I picked out a big over-stuffed chair to park my butt in, relax, stare-out the window at the lighted palms trees, and listen to the tunes, while slowly sipping. Three feet off to my left was an identical chair, occupied by a drunk and drugged-out tall boney white prostitute, apparently struggling to stay conscious. *Perhaps at one time, she actually had a decent figure.* Her face and hair were the last vestiges of her appeal. The pretty prostitute's lack of curving flesh was sad. She was so thin, her pelvic bones protruded, and the inside of her thighs were concave.

Her hands appeared dry, red, puffy, and splotchy, and there was a bandaid on the back of her left hand. *She shoots-up in the back of her hands.* When she walked around, she routinely held them such that her palms faced upward, as a result, the array of angry track marks and purplish abscess scars became apparent. Where most addicts try to conceal their addiction, she displayed her track marks in what

seemed a rather intentional manner. For some reason, certain heroin addicts have a habit of rotating their palms forward, even when walking, especially if their arms are covered with a long sleeved shirt. The emaciated young woman was an easy six feet, without her heels. Her bobbing head was covered with beautiful short ginger hair, so thick it almost looked like fur. *Weird that her body is so wasted, yet her hair looks so healthy.* The woman-child, was dressed in a loose silver silk blouse, with tight glittering silver slacks covering her mile long legs, and opened-toed six inch silver spike heels, adorning her ivory feet. The open blouse made it easy to tell where her ribs joined onto her breastbone. *She's practically has no breasts.* Even her fingernails and toenails were painted glittery silver to match her gaudy outfit. For lack of something to say, and since lots of the guests had been talking about Bella, I waited until her eyes opened, then asked her the big question.

“Who do you think killed Bella?”

“Oh, I known exactly what happened to poor Bella. Believe you me, I fuck’n know, baby! Shit! (long pause) That was a nasty fucked-up way to die, too! That fucking beer bottle thing is too God

damned evil... Had to have been a real monster that did that! Know what I mean?" She proclaimed this, then took a long slow deep breath and exhaled loudly, then deeply inhaled again, as if she were suddenly low on oxygen. This caused her to seemingly become more alert. *She's definitely high!*

She then again blew-out her lips, making them noisily fly outward and flap. With half-lidded unfocused big blue eyes, she had slurred her response though her pouting lips. Still, there was an unmistakable certainty to her claim, even though her head was doing a slow wobble, and her eyelids were barely apart. She then momentarily opened her eyes wide, looked at her empty cup, then leaned back and seemed to fall asleep, mouth open, and breathing deeply. *I don't guess she's overdosing. Her chest is still rising and falling.* While she'd made the assertion of knowing with absolute conviction, yet I foolishly dismissed it, since she appeared to be so stoned, and I was somewhat drunk myself. Moreover, I assumed she would be too difficult to communicate with, and didn't even bother to get her name or address.

Unwisely, I just wrote her off as a rambling messed-up addict, so I got-up and spent a few minutes talking with Tommy about his electronics

work for the Navy on a cruiser, he'd once briefly served aboard. He told me something about an experimental hologram. The lighted ghost-like three dimensional hologram was designed to display images below the surface of the sea (subs and torpedoes), on the surface (ships), as well as in the air (aircraft and missiles). The holographic images just floated above the floor of the CIC (combat information center), or the ship's battle room. It all sounded terribly futuristic. It was the first and the last I heard of it, and still don't know whether or not to believe him, yet he seemed relatively truthful.

When I told Tommy why I was at his party, he didn't seem to mind that I was working for the cops, especially since I wasn't a cop. Though some of the cops were his girls' best customers, but as a rule, he avoided them, and never mentioned their names, and I certainly didn't ask. Feeling the booze, I found drunk Nay-Nay and took her home, then about two hours later, I woke-up, and left for my place. After dragging myself out of bed the next morning, I standing in the shower and thinking about the party from the night before, and recalled the pale junkie dressed all in silver, and her cursing slurry proclamation, about knowing what had happened to

poor Bella.

Part of me was kicking myself for not trying to question her further. Later, I went by an auto parts store, not knowing exactly how many I should buy, I purchased three plastic quarts bottles of their cheapest motor oil, then I drove back to Pretty Tommy's, furtively opened the three plastic bottles, looked around to make sure no was watching, and let them silently slip into the algae covered pool, then I knocked on his door. Back then, every now and then, a few cases of West Nile virus would sprout-up in Mobile, and the pool was already too far gone to warrant repair. It needed to just be drained and filled with dirt.

Yuki opened the door and stuck her beautiful Eurasian face through the opening. She was clearly sleepy; her sleep-swollen lips and heavy eye lids made her even more attractive. Maybe it was an illusion, but her jet black irises seemed to possess a slightly bluish hue on their rims, where they meant the white sclera. The shapely beauty stepped back and opened the door wide, wrapped in a black silk robe, with a large white and silver crane embroidered on the back. The neck and head of the bird ran over her shoulder, and extended onto her

right breast. The white and silver of the bird contrasted nicely with her long jet black hair.

“Nice robe, Yuki.” *God, you’re sexy!*

“Thanks. Tommy picked it up in Japan, when he was in the Navy. He’s still in the shower, but come on in, he’ll be out soon. What brings you around, so early?” She asked, giving me a knowing wink.

Yuki swiveled her head and her perfect intelligent smile was effectively provocative, a photo for the scrapbook of life. She then turned and began to shuffled back toward the bed, with the oversized silk embroidered robe, trailing out behind her, and the long sleeves extending well past her hands.

“Last night, that tall white thin girl dressed in the silver outfit, said something about knowing what happened to Bella. She seemed to be certain, but she was pretty fucked-up. Anyhow, I just wanted to talk to her again... follow-up... so, I’m hoping that Tommy knows how I can find her. I’m assuming Tommy told you that I was trying to help the cops to catch the murderer?”

“Yeah, Tommy told me about what you’re doing. I’m sure he knows where that flaky skinny bitch-junky lives. He had to drive that nasty needle freak

home, last night. You saw how fucked-up she was? She threw-up on the floor, right over there by the door. Tommy knows where every whore on the stroll lives. He thinks he's every bitch's black knight in fucking shining armor... It's always Tommy to the fuck'n rescue. Makes me sick." Yuki said this, as she neared the bed.

Women can be more jealous than men, and she's definitely jealous. Then suddenly, Yuki dropped her silk robe, fully exposing an exquisite perfectly formed butt, that bounced and giggled, and turned sideways granting me a clear view of her breasts, as she climbed back into the bed, and slid under the silky burgundy comforter.

"You mess'n with my woman?" Tommy joked, as he stepped out of the bathroom in his towel, catching me gazing at nude Yuki.

"No, but she's truly a magnificent beauty and definitely worth mess'n with... a beautiful dream come true; but, I don't think I could afford her... perhaps you want'a let her give me a freebie?" I joked. *Hope I haven't overstepped.*

"Hardly... Nothings free in this world. What you doing here, white man?" He continued to joke and

smile. He spoke with a slight black vernacular, but he put it on as a form of humor. Every now and then, Tommy would pretend to speak like a black Baptist preacher, and could sound exactly like Jessie Jacksonian. Although from the South, he spoke with the speed and accent of someone from Northern Virginia; working for the Navy, he'd spent considerable time in the DC area.

"That was a great party last night... thanks. You recall that thin white girl dressed in the silver outfit, last night? Yuki said, you took her home."

"Yeah? I took her home. What's up? Don't tell me you got the hots for that skinny Minnie, Joey?"

"Naw man! That poor thing is a real mess... too many track marks for me. You gotta feel sorry for her. She mentioned that she knew how Bella died, and I didn't follow-up on it. She was so high, I figured she was just babbling for babbling's sake, but I got to thinking about it this morning, and there was something about the way she said that she knew what had happened to Bella. It's been bugging me. She was so certain about knowing what happened to Bella. I'll buy you some breakfast, if you show me where she lives, Tommy."

“Sounds good. Her name is Shirley. She stays in one of those little weekly rental cottages, behind that ancient piece of night soil called, *The Pinewood Motel*. When I was taking her home last night, she told me about you asking her about Bella. I feeling like a western omelet, and we got plenty of time, cuz Shirley won’t get up for a few hours. Most times, these whores sleep the brightest part of the day away. Look at Yuki over there... beautiful as truth, but lazy as a cat, after eating a mouse. ” He loudly responded, so Yuki would hear him.

With that comment, a middle finger on the end of a long slender arm slowly arose high above the covers, wiggled around, then slowly sank back down. I drove Tommy to a little roadside diner, where we ordered breakfast. The diner had a *Pac-Man* video game against a wall. We took turns eating and playing the game. In most respects, he was like any normal young guy. He loved playing the game, talked about sports, music, cars, his days in the Navy, and had a great sense of humor. He wasn’t your typical self-aggrandizing pimp, nothing like what’s generally portrayed in movies. He referred to such old time black pimps and black preachers as those, ‘ancient cretin negroes, who need to die-out, along

with all the white rednecks.'

Clearly, Tommy was a master at the sex game, but never felt the urge to brag. Indeed, he definitely manipulated the girls, taking their money, and withholding sex, to make the girls bring in other girls into his stable. To me, he just seemed like a bright fun guy, who knew how to cheer people up. While he wasn't self-effacing, he didn't bother with the usual macho intimidation, that pimps are so famous for. But make no mistake, through the years, I came to realize that he could be deadly, when need be. He made his own kind of justice, with no regrets, and without excessive unjust force.

Like my Grandpa, he knew true justice is rarely found in the crepuscular bowels of legal system, no matter what Perry Mason, the school system, or the movies might have taught you. Tommy had no inhibitions, when it came to fighting or shooting. In a dangerously confrontational situation, he didn't waste time. He was a man, who never spoke if threatened, only acted quickly. There were occasions where I bore witness to his particular forms of justice. It was violent and unexpected, but always deserved. His motto was, 'if they threaten to kill you, kill 'em, first.' It's the pimp's job to protect his girls.

Rarely did any of the customers do anything untoward. On the other hand, strangers or other known unsavory members in the community would occasionally try to rape a girl, or steal her money. There are many forms of rape, from men who hate women and enjoy inflicting torture or death, to strong rude guys, who are horny, lacking in good judgement, and self control. Some rapists were into power, others anger, and the worst were the sadists.

In addition to having to worry about protecting his girls, there were envious people, who would try to set him up for some pretty edgy stuff, with both the law-enforcement or with the local criminals. The cops either tended to like, or hate, him. The State Attorney was always doing his best to get Tommy on a racketeering charge, of course that began with certain massage parlors opening. The threat of racketeering caused Tommy to take his girls and leave that state for a couple of years. The pimp constantly suffered under three types of pressure. One was men who were jealous of his having five beautiful women. This tended to be local black men and the police. Another came from the drug world, since Tommy was vehemently anti-drug. The last pressure was from guys trying to rape, hurt, rob, or

kill his girls. Since Tommy lacked any biological family, I remarked that his stable was sort of like his family, to which he replied, “They’re not like a family cause each one of em has their particular game and bullshit, which you always have to be keep’n-up with, and every other pimp is try’n to steal every bird in your flock, so there ain’t no relax’n run’n whores. You got to keep em’ healthy, keep em from getting kidnapped, keep em from going to jail, and the cops don’t give out any vouchers anymore, so there’s no peace of mind, Joey.”

Once while I was working on another case, Tommy and I ended-up shooting-up a big cracker-box looking, van. The driver had kidnapped one of Tommy’s new girls, a beauty named, Cream. The kidnaper then used a gun to coerce her to get into the van. Once she stepped-in, he punched her hard in the eye, threw her down on the floor of the van, where he duct-taped her wrists behind her back, then taped her ankles. Lastly, he taped over her mouth, and around the back of her neck.

As her name would imply, she was an exceedingly light-skinned black girl, who possessed shoulder-length naturally curly, Shirley Temple-like ringlet hair, but shiny black instead of light blond.

Such natural hair in black women is indeed a rarity, but oddly the erotic Cream was completely hairless elsewhere, although not because of grooming, but due to a highly erotic mutation... a glorious sight to behold. Most people with such a hairless mutation are also bald on their head, but not Cream.

Too often, kidnapped prostitutes ended-up dead... no witness to the rape, just like Bella ended-up. One of Tommy's other girls, was on the street close to the motel, and had seen Cream's abduction, so she screamed for Tommy. He and I were looking at the algae-covered pond, when we heard the scream. Tommy ran for his car, while the girl continued yelling about the kidnapping, describing the big boxy van, and pointing-out its direction of travel. The van had barely pulled away, since it took the driver a minute to punch-out and tape-up Cream. Sprinting, I jumped in my car, grabbed the pistol out of my glovebox and jammed its barrel under my right thigh, and punched the gas. This was to be my life's only driving-while-shooting experience.

Catching-up to and passing the slower boxy vehicle, I was in the right-hand lane, a few yards just ahead of it, so I grabbed the 9 mm from under my right thigh, cocked the hammer, and thumbed off the

safety. There was already a round in the chamber. Awkwardly, I swapped it over to my left hand, and stuck it out the window and started carefully blasting the front of the van. If you shoot out a front tire, the van which is brutally top-heavy, might roll, possibly killing all inside, including Cream, so the bottom half of the radiator was my choice of target. The driver seemed to think that I was shooting at him, and began to wildly jerk the wheel, every time I fired. But again, I wasn't aiming at the driver, because I had no proof that it was a true abduction, also I didn't want to accidentally hit Cream. For all I knew, something entirely different was happening, and the guy was completely innocent of any wrong doing. For all I knew, he could have been Cream's older brother, who was simply trying to take her home, to save her from a life of a prostitution.

Still, the odds were high that the black kidnapper was hell bent on rape and quite possibly murder to cover his tracks. While I was doing this, Tommy was firing his 1911 .45 automatic, he'd gotten while he was in the Navy. He was trying to shoot-out the rear tires, which are less apt to make the vehicle roll, if they're blown. It didn't take but a few seconds and Tommy was out of ammo, and the tires still weren't

flat, and I had three rounds left in the clip. I just drove, staying in front of the van, preventing it from escaping, and waited to see, if any of my bullets had done their job on the radiator. About that time, I was wishing I had brought a back-up magazine, but as it was about to turn-out, I didn't need it.

Luckily, after a minute, it appeared that at the least one copper-jacketed bullet must have ripped a hole in the radiator, or torn through a hose, or maybe cracked the engine's cheap aluminum block, since steam was puffing out and streaming down beneath the clunky boxy vehicle, and inside the interior. About one minute later, the engine locked-up, and so the kidnapper pulled off the road.

Right before it completely stopped, the agile black man jumped-out into the dark night, and ran like a jack-rabbit, leaving terrified Cream sitting on her butt in the back of the van, which was fast filling with steam. Other than a swollen closed eye and shaking nervously, she appeared to be fine. Tommy untaped her, and immediately she said that she'd never seen the kidnapper before, that he'd pulled a big gun on her and made her get in the van, then punched her in the eye. Unlike many prostitutes, Cream was normally a very quiet gentle spirit.

Occasionally life presents us with a bizarre coincidence, one of mine happened that night, while shooting-up the van. My car radio was playing *Crossroads*, from the *Wheels of Fire* album by *Cream*. The rhythm of the song seemed to match the furious pace of the car chase, and the group's name matched the kidnap victim. Perchance every moment in life is filled with coincidence, if only we were smart enough to decipher them, yet sometimes I feel that's probably what's constantly happening, since each thought, feeling, emotion, motor action, and memory is predicated on the arrangement of atoms in one's brain, one fraction of a second, before they rearrange into said thought, feeling, motor movement, and memory, and if the movement of every particle depends on the arrangement of the universe of particles, a fraction of a second prior, then everything has to be predetermined, and therefore coincidental in an unavoidable manner.

The entire brain, like the rest of the universe, is made-up of interacting subatomic particles, constantly in motion. The human ego is poorly connected with the larger more subconscious brain, and so many things must go unnoticed. In a way, the universe is the ultimate form of beauty, and so all is

beauty, but the self-concerned ego misses that fact. It only exists to glorify and serve itself, and so it fears death, and loves itself. Perhaps the larger a person's ego, the less well it's connected with the rest of the brain, and the less appreciative it is of beauty. This may also imply that chaos is simply undiscovered organization, so in effect, there is no chaos. If the laws of physics actually exists how could there be chaos? Sure there are the incoming sounds, sights, feelings, etc., but even those things originating outside the brain by their subatomic/atomic/molecular arrangements a fraction of a second prior to their creation, create the ever changing present.

Some bunch of photons leave the sun, travel 96 million miles through space, enter earth's atmosphere, reflect off some surface, then enter the eye, and strike a chemical on the rods and cones of the retina, nerve cells fire, and the person sees an image, Or, some group of molecules is hit by some other molecules, which in turn smack into the tympanic membrane down in the ear canal, three little bones vibrate, hairs are vibrated in the cochlea, nerve cells again fire, and a sound is realized. Or maybe, there's a change in barometric pressure, which produces a small breeze caressing someones

skin, thereby activating fine touch receptors at the base of some hairs, and a tactile sensation is born. Could it be any other way? But even if everything was predisposed, chasing and shooting the clunky old van was fun and not boring, especially while *Crossroads* vibrated my eardrums, somewhat stroking my libido.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=becWr0vc6cA>

Amazingly, the chase and shooting of the van hadn't attracted any cops. We didn't know if the van was the kidnapper's, or if he'd stolen it. Tommy went back to the motel, dropping Cream off to be cared for by his other girls. He came back with a five gallon can of gas from the motel manager's tool shed. Making sure no one was watching, he splashed the fuel around the van's interior, where Cream's fingerprints might have been found, then with a lighter, he lit a balled-up waxy paper party cup, and from twenty feet he tossed the flaming cup into the van as he ran away. We bought quickly left the scene.

There had been no keys left in the ignition, and yet the wires didn't appear to have been disturbed, so the driver had most likely taken the keys with him. Neither Tommy nor I knew how to hot-wire it, and where it was sitting and it wouldn't be long before the police came to check it out. There were bullet holes in the back from Tommy's .45, and a few in the front from my 9mm. While politically I consider myself to be slightly to the left of center, the few times I've used a gun, the weapon has always proven to be helpful, so I'm not big on gun control, unless we're talking preventing seriously violent felons, and certain dangerous mental patients from owing guns.

Leaving the breakfast diner, with its somewhat addicting *Pac-Man* machine, Tommy and I headed to the *Pinewood Motel*, to find Shirley the junkie, who'd been at Tommy's party, the night before. Behind the dumpy little motel was a group of small stone cottages, with terra cotta roofs, evenly spaced about five feet apart along a weed eaten circular gravel drive. It was after two in the afternoon, when we finally arrived. Tommy's repeated knocking at long last elicited a muted irritated reply from the opposite side of the overly painted dark brown door.

"Who's there?" Shirley's slightly irksome voice

complained.

“It’s me, and I got company with me.” Tommy matter-of-factly responded.

“Hold your horses, stud. Just give me a couple minutes, to get my shit together... Jesus H. Christ, Tommy! I’ll be right back.” She bellowed back through the closed door.

“I know what that means!” Tommy responded.

“Ha, ha.” She responded.

Tommy and I patiently sat back in the car, and listened to the radio. He used the time to complain that the extremely erotic Yuki was more trouble than all his other girls combined. *He’s evidently got a few legitimate feelings for Yuki.* After five minutes, the door opened and her head protruded. I recall thinking that it was too bad the rest of her didn’t look as beautiful as her face and hair.

“Jesus, Tommy! What are you guys doing here so early? You know, I still got four hour, before I gotta get up to get ready to go to work!” She smilingly complained. *She glad to see Tommy.*

Shirley squinted against the late afternoon sun. Her ultra pale skin looked dry and almost

translucent. Her hair was wet, indicating she'd taken a shower, while we'd sat in the car. She stepped back, opening the door wide to let us enter the grungy little cottage. Tommy immediately bitched at her about her drug habit, and explained why we'd come.

"I'll bet you were out till late, even after I dropped you off. You went back out again, chasing that filthy habit ah yours. You wanta be with me, you gotta clean-up girl, and put some weight on those bones. You know I'll help you get to a rehab. Anyway, Joey here wants to talk to you about Bella. He said that you said something at my party, last night, about who killed her, and he's trying to help the police solve the murder."

"You guessed it right, Tommy. I did go blackout last night, but nobody wants to go to bed, if they're Jonesing." Shirley answered.

Unlike Yuki, Shirley wasn't beautiful in the morning. She looked extremely frail, and was holding her left arm, as if it was slightly in pain. *She probably blew a vein.* Shirley already had a new cigarette going, and so I suspected that residual heroin from right before sunrise and the fresh nicotine were the only nutrients coursing through her blood... *talk*

about the breakfast of the champions. She was nearly nude, dressed only in light blue panties. As an attempt at false modesty, she released her left arm and wrapped it around her tiny breasts with their quarter sized auburn areola but with thick protruding nipples. With her stark rib cage, and the protuberant spines of her vertebrae, it was hard to imagine that some guy might find her appealing.

Nudity is frequently of little to no concern to a junkie. The drug not only strips away the soft bloom of their sexuality, but even their shame and regret for having lost it. Except for her puffy pink scared forearms, swollen hands, ginger hair and red areola, her whole body looked fish-belly white. Every gram of curvaceous beauty appeared to have dissolved from her thin frame... no smooth feminine form to her hips, thighs, butt, or breasts. Worse yet, much of her natural musculature was wasted, making the inside of her thighs noticeably concave, and her knee joints looked too large for her thin calves and thighs. All these detractions testified to her chemical enslavement.

Sadly, the young girl had zero sex appeal. *Who would pay to be with someone who looks like her?* Only her face and thick ginger hair testified to the beauty

which once was. I felt a brief hard pang of pity, when I didn't know the meaning of the word. Her gaunt ivory body forced you to see the desperate little girl still struggling to survive, but she was trapped in an ancient toxic snare. *She looks like the Jews in those Nazi camps.* Shirley was all alone with only her heroin to keep her company. The name of the drug comes from how the drug first makes the user feel... like a 'hero.' Tommy more or less ordered her to put some clothes on. As Shirley left the room to find her robe, Tommy read the pity in my face, and turned to me.

Very few begin using heroin, with the intention of becoming a junkie, but if their brain is naturally low on dopamine, one time use is all it takes. Because of this same brain condition, many doctors have inadvertently created countless addicts. For legitimate reasons, they start genetically predisposed patients on legal drugs, such as adderall, valium, xanax, oxycodone, etc., and then, when the prescription is stopped, the addict faces a life of misery, when never ends no matter how long they remain clean! Consequently, the former patient has no choice but to become a criminal!

The Pitfalls of Death by Dr. Morris E. Y.

Williams

“Best not be looking too hard at that boney body, less you start to feel sorry for her. You know that it’s up to her to get her own shit together, Joey. Don’t be think’n about try’n to help her. Rehab is her only hope, and anything else just delays her getting there. And don’t forget, a fucking junkie sure as hell knows how to play on someone’s pity. She’s acting like she paying you no mind, but believe me, she’s only thinking about how to get your money, so she can shoot-up more shit. Junkies are the world’s masters of manipulation. Don’t think I don’t see that worthless sympathy on your white face. Don’t think about help’n her, cuz then you’ll just be putting more poison in her veins.” He whispered, while she was still back in the bedroom.

“I hear you whispering out there. Don’t you be badmouthing me while I’m back here, Tommy.” Shirley sang-out in a sweet sing-song voice.

Helping an addict, while they’re still addicted is not too different, from trying to put out a forest fire by throwing gasoline on it. Tommy was somewhat right, kicking a habit is almost solely accomplished

by the addict, and pity is a wasted emotion, if not a poison, almost as damaging as heroin itself, since it obstructs in at least three ways. One, any financial help you give an addict just goes to feeding and perpetuating the habit. Two, the pity further damages the addict's already deteriorated self-worth. And three, you waste your time and money, damages your relationship with the addict. Regrettably, Shirley could tell that neither Tommy, nor I found her emaciated form slightly desirable.

As my eyes traveled around the stark tiny cottage, they settled on a scratched-up olive green coffee table, on which laid a large heavy glass amber-colored ashtray, similar to one my brilliant Grandpa once had in his office, usually containing a pile of ash, and his half smoked cigar butts, as well as brown sticky lumps of chewed cigar. *Shirley and Grandpa, each have their drugs, heroin and tobacco vs. whiskey and tobacco.* Inside the yellow ashtray, instead of a cigar, sat the world's plainest small metal teaspoon. In the spoon was a tiny piece of damp matted cotton, which she'd probably pulled-off a Q-tip.

Next to the ashtray on the surface of the over painted olive colored coffee table sat a small well

used plastic insulin syringe, a cheap red *Bic* lighter, and a tiny empty two inch by two inch plastic bag, with just the slightest powdery residue, fogging its inner walls, almost every crystal had been meticulously tapped out into the spoon. *She apparently doesn't care if we see these things, or maybe she wants us to see them.* Everything about Shirley said she only cared about heroin... to avoid getting sick and depressed. Tommy pointed out the spoon and works, then with a sneer, drew that same index finger across his throat. Clearly, he had no sympathy for her chemical weakness. The woman-child had apparently been shooting-up, before she went to sleep that night, or maybe she'd saved a dose for when she got up, which she may have done, while Tommy and I were sitting in the car, waiting for her to answer the door.

While the tiny piece of damp cotton, and the cheap plastic syringe depressed me, it appeared to infuriate Tommy. *He must have lost someone to addiction, maybe his mom.* After watching her observing Tommy, I figured that she'd purposely left the evidence of her addiction, for him to see, since anger can be used to root your presence into the emotional framework of another's limbic brain, and

eventually lead to interest and caring, if not more, and junkie's do so want people to care... any kind of emotion or drama means support and support means they have a better chance to feed their ever-demanding habit. However, like non-addicts, not all addicts are the same. Unexpectedly, Tommy suddenly yelled at her.

“You need to get off this murderous shit, Shirley! Your white haired Grandma is too old to be raising your two kids! You know, I can help you get into a rehab. The *Salvation Army* rehab has a bed open, right now. Shooting-up that boy and girl every day into those skinny white arms ah yours, just keeps getting worse and worse, till you go fuck'n schizo, or die. As fucked-up as you were when I took you home last night, you still when out got some money to shoot-up. It's a wonder you got a fuck'n veins left. You know how you've been stumbling around the streets some nights, looking like a mindless zombie, talking to folks that aren't there. It's that cocaine you been shoot'n. If you're gonna do drugs, stick to the heroin. You got to turn this shit around, Shirley. That cocaine has changed your nature, cuz I've seen you looking at Yuki. Get some help, and the sooner the better. Hurry-up and get dressed, Shirley. Joey here

is waiting to talk with you.” *She’s gotten under Tommy’s skin.*

“Thank you Tommy. You’re just so sweet to be worrying about me, like that. You can bet your fine black pimp’n ass, that when I’m good-n-ready to make myself sick as a dog, with them nasty-ass withdrawals, and feel like I want to commit suicide, I’ll make sure to let you know. You’ll be the first to know, and you can be there to watch me puke my ever-love’n guts out. And don’t you be try’n to get the police to bust me, cuz withdrawals in jail can kill me, and if you do that, and I live, I’ll hate you for fuck’n ever... no shit! They don’t give you nothing, not one single shot, not a pill... strictly fucking cold-turkey. The CO (corrections officer) just finds you all alone and dead on the floor of your cell. But you know, when I do clean-up and get my weight back, you’ll be knock’n on my door, baby! What did you want to know about, Joey?” She called that out from the bedroom, and then strolled in, dressed in a fluffy white bathrobe.

The white bathrobe made me think about the first day that I meant Rita in Acapulco; that day when I’d seen her by the pool, and she’d gone inside to reemerge in a fluffy white bathrobe. The contrast

between Shirley, the junkie prostitute, and Rita, Wayne's magnificent wife, was startling; it was like death vs. life. Shirley was speaking the truth, for in those days, addicts were looked at with marked distain, as if they were subhuman, deserving of being made to suffer. When they got locked-up, there was no medical assistance. It was then believed by many police and other professionals, that forcing the addict to undergo cold turkey would better insure that they didn't later relapse, when science has demonstrated that it's just the reverse. Cold turkey further destroys the part of the brain, which represents willpower, and so the addict, whose gone through unassisted withdrawals, is more apt to relapse.

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/heroin-withdrawal-jail-deaths-treatment-advocates/>

In the Mobile jail, it was strictly sink or swim, for detoxing addicts. Some had been known to tear their clothes into strips, tie the pieces to gather to fashion a rope of sorts, then they'd tie one end to one of the bars of the cell, only about five feet above the ground. Then while sitting on the floor, they'd loop the other end around their neck, and simply lean

forward. The pressure on their throat isn't enough to strangle them, yet it is enough to cut off the blood flow to and from the brain (blocking the carotids arteries taking blood to the brain, as well as blocking the jugulars veins returning blood from the brain to the heart), so the addict blacks out, and once they're unconscious, their continued forward leaning keeps pressure on the noose, ergo a painless death soon follows, and they escape the misery of withdrawals, and having to live like an addict.

The jailers' crass and cruel misconception was that by making the poor addict go through withdrawals, without any medical assistance, it teaches them a lesson, so that they'd be less likely to consider using again. 'They need to be taught a lesson.' However, such a violent medical insult, as unassisted withdrawals, actually has the reverse effect, driving the dopamine levels of the brain even lower, making the addict more prone to return to use. Neurotransmitter levels in the brain's *Substantia Nigra* are markedly degraded, by the stress of unsupported withdrawals, thereby further lowering the brain's ability to motivate its owner, which translates into increased craving, ergo their inevitable return to abuse.

The psychological component to this is that cold-turkey and relapse are so damaging to the addict's self-esteem, that they may begin to perceive themselves as not being worth trying to save... so why even bother to try? Hence, they give-up! Jails now offer a marginal amount of assistance to the person forced into withdrawals by incarceration, but it's still far from ideal. Frankly, withdrawals from opiates are far too dangerous to be handled in a jail dispensary. Still, they're not quite as dangerous as alcohol withdrawals. Per capita, more people die during alcohol withdrawals, than heroin. However, probably more narcotic addicts die of overdose, than alcoholics overdose on booze.

“Sorry to bother you so early, Shirley. Every now and then, I work with the cops on a case, but I’ve never been a cop, and I don’t get paid. Pretty much, I just work on murder cases, and a few other types, but never any drug cases, so you don’t have to worry. I wanted to ask, if you...” I began my explanation, but she cut me off.

“I remember you, last night. You were drunk and I was fucked-up. I told you I knew what happened to Bella, and you want to know what I’ve got to say. Right? I wasn’t bullshitting you, at the party. You

thought I was too fucked-up to be worth listening to. You got Pretty Tommy here to bring you. Didn't you?" Shirley cut to the chase.

Considering how wasted she'd seemed, I was amazed that she remembered anything about the night before. Some combat pilots can make night carrier landings while drunk. I used to race cars and shoot pigeons on booze, and apparently some junkies can have total recall, when fully trashed. This was another strange little coincidence. Both combat flying, and hooking, were hazardous professions, which often resulted in the death of the practitioners, and both professionals frequently indulged in the chemical enhancement of their respective neurologies, at least some of the combat pilots of yesteryear did. As a child, without exception, every combat pilot I meant was a big drinker.

"Yeah, I was too drunk to ask you about what you knew, and I thought you were too buzzed-out to tell me, and probably didn't know what you were talking about, but I am hoping that I underestimated you. So yes, would you mind telling me what you think happened to Bella?" I humbly asked.

"Shot-up some brown Mexican boy in this vein (she pointed out the inflamed area in her left hand),

right before I came to Tommy's party, then I fucked-up that smooth high by drinking Tommy's free booze. So, I had to go out later to score, again. Couldn't go to bed like that. Booze can mess-up a good heroin high. *Junkies must be ambidextrous, to shoot dope, in both arms?* Look Joey, I really don't know first-hand what happened to Bella, but I'm pretty sure I know someone, who does. She's pretty convincing. You need to talk to one of my fellow whores, a big black girl named, Nikki. She went through some real crazy shit, one night, with a nasty-ass freak, a crazy white dude. He's a heroin dealer, but even so, I've never seen him. I think there's a real good chance he's the guy, who did that awful stuff to Bella." *It's less of a lead than I hoped; still, it's a lead.*

Prostitutes tend to either intensely hate or love other prostitutes, not too different, from the cops at the *Sheriff's Department*. Each cop is either an enemy or ally of another cop. A fair percentage of prostitutes are bisexual, which contributes in various ways to the never-ending love-hate thing between them. That isn't too often the case with cops. If there are gay cops in the *Mobile Sheriff's Department*, they are definitely closeted. Now days, there are a few cops, who have come out, but not back then.

“You see Joey, this guy stopped and picked-up Nikki and drove her to an empty house out in the fuck’n country. She got naked, and he tried to get Nikki to let him tie her up. Well, Nikki wasn’t playing that game, so he got pissed and went out to his car, grabbed a fuck’n gun, and when she saw him coming back with the gun in his hand, she got scared and busted-out a bedroom window, but he came looking for her. He was gonna kill her! She hid in some black swamp, then got to a road and caught a ride the fuck outta there. So, you really need to talk to Nikki. Probably that fucker that tried to hurt Nikki is the same motherfucker that murdered Bella. You need to hear how Nikki talks about that asshole. She’s still freaked-out to the max... scared shitless... too scared to work the street! That lunatic has got to be one major fuck’n bogeyman, Joey. Nikki is still go’n crazy about what happened to her, that night.” Shirley postulated.

At one point during our conversation, Shirley’s eyes randomly tracked around the room, as if they were following an imaginary fly. *She’s probably thinking about her next fix, or maybe she’s hallucinating.* And so, I felt like my visit, concerning Bella’s murder, was being perceived as a frustrating

waste of her time; since when you're a junkie, the only true motive for talking with anyone, is the procurement of drugs. Once an addict, the previous drug-free life, seems like a far away dream.

Consequently, Shirley seemed like a puppet, controlled by the cold steely wires of addiction... no more freewill, if there is such a thing. Addicts receive only the briefest moments of normalcy. Because their drug is illegal and therefore expensive, they have to live their entire life to better insure their next fix, line, rock, hit, etc. If they could somehow acquire their heroin, as easily as a cup of coffee, their lives would be transformed.

The brief description of what had happened to Nikki had obviously upset Tommy. My feeling was that Tommy hadn't known about Nikki's encounter with the man with the gun. Tommy had a very direct way of dealing with such evil guys. That man represented a clear and quite likely present danger to Tommy's girls, and he was obviously interested.

"Why haven't I heard about this scumbag? Why didn't you tell me, Shirley? Why didn't Nikki tell me? You were at my party last night, and didn't say shit about him to me. What's wrong with you? That insane dude could be a danger to every girl on the

stroll. Guys like him don't just stop and go away, and you know it, Shirley. Jesus Christ! You should have said something. Did you tell the cops about him?"

"Like they'd give a damn, Tommy! Besides, this only happened a few days ago. I sure don't owe you, cuz of some party, and I sure as hell, don't work for you, neither; at least, not yet. But, I know you want me, Tommy. But, I actually did tell one cop about what happened to Nikki, and he just shrugged his shoulders, and said, 'That's what she gets for wok'n the street.' You know, cops don't give a shit about whores, unless they're horny. I get tired of trying to pretend I like them."

"Jesus, Shirley... Since you know that the cops could care fucking less, all the more reason you should have told me. Maybe you do need to go cold turkey in a jail cell. You know that on the street, I'm the only person, who's got your back. You think a cop will give a damn, if someone kills you? They won't come to your funeral. They haven't done Jack-shit about Bella... have they?" Tommy responded.

Disappointed that Shirley didn't really know anything first hand, I put Tommy and Shirley in my car, drove Tommy back to his apartment, and thanked him for his help. Shirley then showed me

where Nikki lived, burly unfortunately Nikki wasn't home, so I took Shirley out for breakfast at the same diner, where I'd taken Tommy, earlier. She hardly ate a thing. Afterwards, I drove her back to her dingy cottage. She tried her best to hit me up for money, saying that she needed to buy some essential feminine items, but junkies don't have periods, and as a result, they often later have serious problems with their uterus. Fibroid uterine tumors are common in heroin addicted prostitutes. All I could think about was her little plastic syringe in the amber-colored glass ashtray on her coffee table, and the little spoon with the piece of damp cotton, so I gave her nothing; still, after dropping her off, I went to the grocery and brought her back a bag of food, and dropped it off. She thanked me, but even as emaciated as she was, it was clear she couldn't have cared less about the food, yet she did seem to like the bag of chocolate doughnuts. Junkies love sweets, but nothing with any form of genuine nutrition. Sweets give them energy, without backing-up their drug-slowed intestinal tract with food bulk. Sweets also raise their blood insulin, which helps them to relax. Considering their eating habits, and what they're forced to go through, it's amazing junkies last, as long as they do. What help them last as long as they do are state supported

rehab. Every couple of years, the junkie finds their way into one, and they're firmly convinced that they're going to remain clean.

<http://www.drugrehab.ca/what-is-the-life-expectancy-of-a-heroin-addict.html>

“Don’t overlook the healthy things in the bag. Don’t just eat those chocolate doughnuts, girl.”

“Thanks.” She said with the flattest of affects. *What a wasted life!*

For Shirley, I’d been a huge waste of her time, since she was only interested in seeing those tiny bubbles, coming up though that warm addictive light caramel Mexican heroin, in that cheap little metal spoon, as heated by that red plastic *bic* lighter. The highlight of her day was when she’d drop her tiny piece of cotton into the spoon’s warm bubbling liquid, place the well used tip end of the tiny insulin needle, into the tiny piece of cotton, then gradually pull back the plunger, drawing the heroin into the syringe, with the cotton filtering-out large impurities, but not the bacteria or viruses... not the various types of hepatitis, or *HIV*. In those days, state

laws created barriers that made it hard for i.v. drug users to get clean needles. Those laws undoubtedly helped to increase the spread of hepatitis, and *AIDS*. Even now in Alabama, the drugstore employees think they're doing the right thing, when they make it hard for a person to legally buy a syringe. Because of right wing politics, the states were slow in amending the needle laws. Right wingers would rather punish the addict, than to help them, stupidly arguing that punishment leads of abstinence.

Nevertheless, Shirley probably already had *HIV*. Once the needle was loaded Shirley would then gently push and tap it, into the resistant abused vein. Tapping the syringe better allowed the needle to only penetrate through one wall of the vein. The plunger would be drawn back, about a quarter of an inch or so, and with the appearance of the minute swirling red plume into the syringe, Shirley would then push the plunger down, loosen the tourniquet, and so it was time to go to heaven or hell, depending on how you look at it. What a horrible mess that child was in! I never saw her again, but from Tommy, I later heard she'd died, the following spring, due to a brain abscess. Seeing her twice was enough, her desperate condition was too depressing.

The intelligent addict can easily rationalize their abuse. The wise addict finds it much more difficult. Since wisdom must be absent to begin the journey, there are few wise addicts, yet plenty of intelligent ones.

The Jade Arrow, by Wilber Ayi Moses

On my fourth trip to Nikki's house, I found her home. She answered the door frowning, as if she were trying to remember, where she knew me from.

"Oh hey, how ya do'n?" She said, narrowing the gap between her eyebrows and pretending to remember me, but she hadn't a clue, who I was since it was the first time I'd meant her. No doubt she assumed that I was one of her former johns.

Going to interview a prostitute is like going to the street version of the Library of Congress; they have tons of information, but it's nonacademic. Nikki was a big boned black gal, with perfect coffee skin, and a dynamite shape, very large breasts and ass, as well as beautiful enormous ovoid eyes, but with a paradoxically high sounding voice, similar to *Minnie Mouse*. A big beautiful women equipped with a

cartoon voice was shocking, indeed. As stated, a disproportionate number of thin white men go for large women, like Nikki. Opposites really do attract.

“You don’t know me, Nikki. Shirley said that I should speak with you. A couple of days ago, she showed me where you lived. I’ve come by a few times, but you weren’t home whenever I dropped by.” I began.

Introducing myself, I explained that I was looking into Bella’s murder, but was not a cop. Then, I told her what Shirley had told me and asked Nikki to please tell me about the man, who had tried to hurt, if not kill her, a few nights prior. She invited me inside. After we were seated, she none too comfortably, proceeded to describe what had happened that night. *She still afraid of that guy!*

“Shirley should know better than to be discuss’n my business, with you. She’s not a bad person, but she is a serious junkie with a very big mouth. That freaky little junkie calls herself like’n me, but I ain’t gay. I don’t like women, like that. She’s always hit’n on me, though. I like mens, only. Anyway, I did have a real scary thing happen. Some white guy tried to kill me. I was out there on the stroll, down near Green Street. Nobody was stop’n, that night, then

that horrible white man pulled up in his creepy ole big black van, and told me to get in, and I hadn't made any money that night, and needed the cash." *Another bad guy. driving a van...*

"If you don't mind me ask'n, What did you need the money for?" I inquired.

"I ain't no junkie, but my rent was due, and my kids be needed stuff. They stay with my mom, but I still has to pay for everything. I ain't like Shirley, shoot'n up all kinds a shit in my veins, and I carry plenty of condoms. I should'a known that guy was gonna be trouble. He was way too serious look'n, like he was straight out of ah damn horror movie. I do like horror movies. At first, I was scared, but then he smiled and lifted-up a folded-up piece of newspaper, on the console, and underneath it was a stack of twenty's right there, between the front seats. So like a fool, I got in... big mistake! Whew! He said that he figured that I was good for at least \$200, maybe more. You know, if I was friendly enough... Shit... I never should have gotten in that van... never! I should'a stayed in school, instead of dropping out... should'a, would'a, could'a, that's the story of my life. Well, fuck me, cuz it's too late to change, now. I'll never get back to school, with my record for

solicitation. I wanted to be a nurse like my aunt. That'll never happen." She sighed.

At this point, Nikki hesitated. It was clear the memory of that night was heavy on her mind, and stalling her speech. Maybe, the delay was owing to a little *PTSD*, about what happened that night. Her brow furrowed with the unpleasant recollection, and for a few seconds she just stared down at the carpet. So, I told her to take her time, and I just relaxed. Telling people not to hurry and to take their time, sometimes speeds them up; especially if they're nervous. After a fifteen or twenty-second pause, she started talking, again.

"We drove way out'a town into the country and even that was scary. There ain't many street lights, out there. Something was tell'n me he was dangerous. But stupid me, I needed the money, and that \$200 would'a really helped things. I got a little criminal record, and can't get no good job. Nobody will hire me with solicitation charges, plus I got a petty theft, and that's a third degree felony. You might as well be a convicted serial killer, when it comes to get'n a job. My kids need lots of things: clothes, shoes, school stuff, and I just walked out of *Walmarty* with their stuff in a grocery cart, and out of

nowhere this old guy was right on me, and there was a cop car sitting in the parking lot.” At this point, she looked directly at me, to see if I judged her, and so I just shrugged, as if it was no big deal.

Trying to make her relax, I responded. “You’re right, Nikki. Sometimes the world is cruel and people don’t believe in second chances. I say, we all know we’re guilty as sin of something or another. Some people just happen to get nailed by the police. I used to deal drugs... nothing hard, except a little meth, but we thought meth was safe, back then. I didn’t get caught. So you tried to get stuff for your kids, and I got people stoned. Who’s the biggest sinner, you or me? And, I wasn’t supporting any kids. Besides, you shouldn’t feel bad, since I’m the one begging for information, from you, so I sure am not judging you.”

“Well, I should’a jumped outta that God damn black van, or never got into it to begin with. Way out in the country, he pulled up to this ugly old house in the dark... drove around to the back yard and parked. We got out and went in the back kitchen door. First thing I noticed was that there weren’t no furniture in that creepy ole house. And, in the bedroom there was only this bed with no sheets, no blankets, no pillows... just the bare mattress on a

boxsprings. He lowered the blinds, so I took all my clothes off, thinking we were going to have sex, but he still was dressed. At first, I just figured he might be shy. That was a mistake. He only had unbuttoned his shirt, a little. I could see a little gold cross hanging around his neck, so stupid me, I was glad to see he was a Christian. Christian my ass! I was real nervous about him. For a little bit, I thought everything was okay, cuz I could tell he liked look'n at my body. Told me he liked to watch women undress. I just wanted to get it over with... take my money, and get the hell back to Mobile!"

At this point, Nikki took a long deep breath and seemed to be working up her courage to continue with the story. Once again, she just stared at the floor, but began to open and close her hands with her elbows straight and locked. It was like she was trying to use the movement of her fingers to get herself out of a trance. So, I just remained silent, sympathetically nodded my head a couple of times, not wanting to spook her. After some time, she looked up at me, unclasped her hands one last time, then continued with her story.

"Shit... this ain't easy talk'n bout him. I reached at him to unbuckle his belt, think'n that maybe he

wanted me to, but then he gets all serious like, and tells me he wants to tie me up. He just sorta blurted that out, all the sudden like, and loud. He was still dressed, and I could see from his face, he was get'n all crazy. So, I got real scared... told him that I didn't do that shit... he got upset... looking psycho like, but he didn't say nothing. He stood there look'n at me, then he looked at the wall and started to blink a lot, like he's try'n to remember something, or decide what to do next. I don't know what was going through his God damned broke head. I've seen a whole lot a freaks in my day, and knew that white man was plum dangerous. God, did that room smell bad!

Then, I sees these little skinny pieces of rope on laying around on the carpeting. I figured it was the rope, he wanted to tie me up with, and there was no way I was gonna let that motherfucker tie me up. Hell, no! Then, he don't say nothing, and he just up and walked right out of the bedroom, and back out the back door, and got into his ugly black van. I though he was going to get some condoms, or to get the money, or to drive-off and leave me way out there, in that old empty house. To tell you the truth, I was kinda hoping the motherfucker would leave. I'd

ah just walked to one of the neighbors and called a friend to come get me. That's when I started to get really scared. A sweat broke-out all over my body. There I was, like a naked fool, standing in the bedroom of some crazy manic. I walked over to the door and was watch'n through the crack where the door hinges be, to see what he was doing. I shoulda been get'n my clothes on. But right then..."

At this point, Nikki again stalled out, and for a third time, started staring at the carpet, and deep breathing, apparently remembering what happened. *She's having flashbacks.* Nikki looked like her mind had gone into orbit. I just sat and once again let her collect herself. At one point, she looked-up and had the thousand yard stare, gazing right through the wall behind me. After a sudden unexpected extra deep breath, she again focused on my face and continued-on.

"I was wondering why he had gone out to the van. Then all the sudden, I sees he's come'n back in. At first, I didn't see the gun, cuz it matched his black pants, and he had it down against his leg, but then I sees it his hand. Shit, I only had a couple of seconds, before he'd be back in the bedroom and shoot my ass dead. I didn't even have time to put my clothes on. I

got so fucking scared, I just ran flat-out straight at the closed window, with the blinds down, and when I hit it hard, and the whole fuck'n window, metal frame and all, blinds and everything, just came-out and fell-outside smack on the fuck'n ground, with me on top of all that window glass. *The window must have been put in with small nails.* I don't know how I did it, but thank God I got out and ran."

"Jesus! It sure hurt bad, when I hit the ground. My back and legs still hurt me, and I keeps have'n these terrible fuck'n nightmares, about that stupid house, that big ass gun, and that crazy fuck'n white man. After I hit the ground, and I didn't waste a second, just got my legs under me and hauled ass across the street and into this swamp-like woodsy area. It was real dark and I couldn't see things too good. Fuck... I was scared to death! While I was run'n, I just knew I'd hear that gun shoot, but he didn't. I did him he say, 'Oh Shit!' Maybe he was afraid the neighbors would hear the shot, or maybe he thought they'd heard me bust'n out the window. I don't know what that scary man was thinking! I just kept move'n into the dark swamp. I was hard to see where I was going... no moon that night."

At that point, Nikki stopped talking, got-up from

of her comfortable threadbare chair, and walked into her kitchen. A couple seconds later, she called out, asking me if I'd like a beer. I said, "Yes," and she returned with two tallboys. I don't like dem lite beers, hope you like *Blue Ribbon*. We popped the tops, as she sat back down, and took an extra long slow silent swig, followed by a couple of large swallows, which seemed to have emptied about half the tall can. *Liquid courage*. She then sat silently for a few seconds. Afterwards, she let-out one huge belch, followed by a few lesser ones, and we laughed. We laughed quite a bit, an effort to dispel the tension her story had created.

"Excuse me." She apologized.

"I can tell taking about that lunatic, makes you a little nervous. It would anyone..." I commented.

"Hell, yes! It sure do, baby. It's sort of like being there, all over again. And, dem dreams, I be having are terrible... terrible! He be in dem dreams." Nikki complained. *She's been through the meat grinder on this one.*

Then we laughed, again. I thanked her for the beer, just slowly sipped, and waited for her to continue whenever she was ready. The beer can was

cold, and in the humid air of Mobile, it began to sweat, and that's when I saw the sweat sheen on Nikki's forehead. *She's definitely scared.* Because of recalling that night, she was practically paralyzed with fear. So I just sat and sipped and told her how good the beer tasted. She kept on silently sipping, till the can was completely empty. It was easy to tell that she wanted another one.

“Why don't you grab another beer Nikki. I know that taking about that night is a real kick in the ass for you.” I suggested.

She didn't say a word, just got up and did as I suggested. Came back, popped the top, and after she was half-way through the second can, she began again. She was a big girl and a big drinker.

“Like I said, I started running across the road, and into some really dark boggy swampy area, where I couldn't see shit, so I cut my feet on some rocks or glass or something, cuz I couldn't see. It was so dark. See here?”

At that point, she took-off both her house slippers and she extended the bottoms of her feet in my direction, so I could see the cuts still healing on the soles of her feet. One cut looked to have partially

split-up the edge of her heel. *That had to hurt!*

“Oh Lord, it was so God damn dark that night. You know what it’s like, when you can’t see where you’re going, but you know you got’s to keep run’n, cuz some crazy motherfucker is behind you with a gun, and you ain’t even got no clothes on? I knew he was gonna kill me! I just knew I was dead. My family would see my naked prostitute’n body dead in the swamp. How fucked-up is that? Think about that, Joey. *She remembered my name.* I kept quietly moving, and fell a whole bunch a times. Cut-up my knees and hands. It was all marshy or swampy. It smelled like death. I was already cut and scratched-up from fall’n on top of the fuck’n window glass. See I still got this big cut on my arm, from landing on the window.” She showed me a sizable gash, still on inside of her right elbow, with a deep thick scab the size of a yellow pencil.

“All this warm sticky blood was just ah running down my arm and dripping off my fingers. I knew I was bleed’n real bad, but I couldn’t really see how much. Thought I might die. My back really hurt too, from hit’n the ground, outside the window, but I had to keep move’n. I wanted to cry, but I was afraid to make a sound... I knew that crazy man was look’n

for me and I didn't want him to hear me cry'n. I held this cut on my arm with my hand, try'n to stop the bleed'n. (She actually used her left hand to put pressure on the wound, as if it was still bleeding.) Finally, I just squatted down between a little dirt mound, and some ole bushes. I tried to breathe real quite like."

Nikki continued pressing-on her left palm against the mostly healed wound. Clearly, she was reliving that scary night, right there in her tiny living room. Her facial grimace, and her body's tension were plain testaments to the horrors she'd faced that night.

"I even tried not to breath loud and that was hard, since I was scared bad, cut-up, bleed'n, and I was tired from run'n. I breathed slow with my mouth wide open, and with my hands in front of my face to help block my breath'n sound. Sit'n on the ground, I kept my face behind a short bush. I knew it was too dark for him to see me, so I just stayed put, and didn't make no noise. I couldn't see him, but I sure heard him go walk'n on by, right close in front of me... ten or twenty feet... and then thank God, I heard him keep go'n off deeper into the creepy dark swamp, looking for me with his God damn gun. I'm sure glad he didn't have a flashlight. He was just

look'n to shoot me dead, and probably bury my ass in that black swamp. I waited a little while, and just listened. When I thought he was long gone, real quiet like, I crept back out to the road, twisted my ankle, and then I started to kinda hop-run'n up the road, praying that a car would show-up. I was pray'n to Jesus to send me help. I sure as hell didn't want to see that black van come'n for me."

At this point, she reached down and massaged her right ankle, chugged-down her second beer, and let out a small chuckle. I took the nervous laugh to correspond to the point in the story, where she was happy, that she'd out foxed the killer, and gotten away. Then, she took a deep breath and started talking again. Obviously, the two beers had helped her, to snap-out of her *PTSD*.

"Once out of the swamp and away from that crazy lunatic, I'm running down the God damn dark road, naked and bleed'n. The blood on my hand and arm was all sticky. My big black breasts were bouncing all around. I try to hold them, while I'm running, so I end-up get'n blood on my breast. Right then, I was telling myself, I was never work'n the fucking street no more, 'no more prostitution for me,' I'm say'n to myself. Then, I was think'n, 'Sweet Jesus,

please send me a car, and get me outta here.’ Right then I see these headlights, come’n up the street, aimed right at me, and thank God, not from the direction of that evil house. This old white couple came driving-up. I’m waving my arms and screaming for help and got no clothes on. I’m doing my best to cover myself, and I’m all bloody, but those old folks... they still stops. God bless, em! I guess they could see I was real scared. I was yell’n, ‘Help! Help me, please help me! Oh, help me! I’m hurt and there’s a man after me. He’s gonna kill me.’”

“They told me to hurry and get in the backseat. I get em to do a u-turn, and they drove me all the way, back to here. I didn’t wants to tell them I was a hooker, so I told them, I’d had a fight with my boyfriend, and he’d been drinking. First, they wanted to take me to the hospital, but I begged them not to. Then, they wanted to take me to the police station, but finally I got them to just drop me off here. They were so nice. I sat on the backseat behind the husband, while the wife tried to calm me down. I lied and told them I lived here, with my mother. I’m sure I got blood all over their back seat.” Nikki finished the story, while shaking her head, and staring down at her feet.

“You’re lucky as hell to be alive, Nikki. That was one hell of a story. What did this bad guy look like?” I asked.

“Like the fuck’n devil... He was real white, tall, thin, got a little brown beard and mustache... little bitty eyes, and a big old nose. He seemed real smart, but evil as Satan his-self. Shit Joey, that fucker was going to kill me! I know he was. I just know it... ain’t no doubt! He probably still wants to kill me, cuz he knows that I know what he looks like. He was the fuck’n devil... pure evil. (At this point, Nikki was cruising on pure adrenaline.) On the way, driving out to the house, he kept asking me if I liked heroin. I am so scared of him. I don’t ever want to see him.”

“Went to the store yesterday, and saw a black van, and it scared me so bad, I almost wet myself. Then, I sees a little black woman was drive’n it, so I got scared for nothing. I’m still scared. I’m too scared to work the street. So, I been work’n my regulars and stay’n away from that part ah town, lessen its down by the liquor store, where there’s plenty of people. I’m think’n about buying myself a gun. A little one, I can hide. You got one, you want sell me, Joey? Can you get me one, something cheap? I really do need one, baby. The police don’t want to protect the girls.”

“No, sorry Nikki, I don’t know how to get you a gun. But, I got to say, you’re one tough girl. Bust’n that window out is something else! Most people would have stayed there and been shot dead, or worse. You’re one hell of a survivor. You think that crazy guy could have killed Bella?”

“You know it had to be him. Shit, he’s the worst thing I’ve ever seen... pure evil.” Nikki stated with certainty.

While it was a grimly convincing story, there was absolutely no real evidence that the weird guy was Bella’s killer, there was more than a reasonable possibility that he could have been. Besides, it was the only lead I had, but my gut told me Nikki’s john was quite possibly Bella’s killer.

“Nikki, do you think, that if I drove you around out in the countryside, you could locate that house... the one where the weirdo took you to in the black van that night?”

“Yeah, I can probably find it, but I sure don’t wants to stop or be seen out there, and I show don’t wants to be in court testifying against that motherfucker. Hell no! Not with him in the courtroom, so whatever you find-out, if you go to the

police don't include me in it. I don't want nothing to do with that demon! If I let you take me out there, and I points-out the evil fuck'n house, you has to swear to keep right on driving, and not stop, not even slow down! Hear me? If he's look'n out a window, or out in the yard, I don't want him see'n me, or think'n that you're even look'n at his place. Don't even get that crazy man slightly suspicious. If he gets spooked, he might write your license plate number down and maybe find you. You make me the promise that we don't stop, or even act curious abouts his place, and I will shows you the house. Don't even stare at his house! And, make sure you got plenty of gas, cuz you don't want to get stuck near his house."

The two tallboys had bolstered her courage considerably, but to actually go to find the house, more alcohol was needed. All things considered, I was surprised Nikki agreed to point-out the house.

"Thank you, Nikki! I promise, we'll just cruise right on by. Don't worry, I certainly understand, why you're scared. You've been through enough shit, and you've got good reason to be scared, so we'll just drive out there and keep right on going... no stopping, no slowing, no staring at him or his house.

When we pass it, I'll hardly glance at it. I just want to know where the house is, so I can check it out, later. I got an old floppy fishing hat in the car, and a pair of sunglasses in the glovebox; you can wear them, that way, if he's outside, you just tell me which house it is, and scoot-down low in the seat, and keep your face looking in a direction, so he won't see your face, then I'll bring you right back here... solemn promise, and I'll make sure he isn't following us, scout's honor. You can bet that if he's the one, who killed Bella, and after what he tried to do to you, he's gonna probably kill, again. Like most people enjoy love and sex, there's some guys, who get-off on killing."

Finishing my beer, Nikki and I climbed in my car. Instead of taking me up on the offer of the sunglasses and fishing hat, when we left her place, she'd brought along a fluffy church-going hat and her own huge black plastic sunglasses decorated with a handful of rhinestones. If nothing else, her disguise was sure to call attention to her; nevertheless, it concealed her identity.

At Nikki's insistence, we first stopped at an old decrepit low-budget liquor store, with a drive-through window, to pick-up a pint of Jack and two

small plastic cups of ice, complete with the tiny hollow red plastic swizzle sticks. Each cup held a little more than two shots. Since I confine my drinking to the evening, but I knew she didn't want to drink alone. Most drinkers are more comfortable with a fellow drinker. So there I was... drinking and driving, while keeping my eyes peeled for the Mobile cops. Nikki, who possessed extremely large sexy beautiful dark lips, puckered them around the tiny red sizzle stick, and was sucking. I tried to concentrate on my driving. Thusly, she finished the first drink (two shots) in a matter of seconds. Reaching for the bottle, she kept drinking in that fashion, but didn't show signs of calming down, until she'd downed a quarter of the pint. Forty-five minutes later, north of Mobile, more than half the pint was gone, still Nikki was able to find the place. She got a serious case of the willies, just looking at the house from a quarter mile away; and sure enough, there were woods with some marshland directly across the street, where Nikki had supposedly hidden that night, after she busted out the window. No one was in the yard, or looking out a window. After she'd covertly pointed-out the house, she proclaimed that she wanted to leave. Briefly glancing at it, the house looked like a fairly

nondescript three bedroom ranch style brick home, not old or creepy, as she'd inferred. There was only one house near it, and it was about about half a block away. Then some other homes about a mile, down the road. She had remained petrified that the monster would be in his yard, or looking out a window, and spot her, but as it turned-out, neither he nor his van were anywhere in sight.

After an hour long drive, I was hoping to look around a little more, but even half in the bag, Nikki was clearly too frightened for me to ask her permission. She plainly wanted to head straight home, so as promised, I obliged her fears, and kept-on driving back to Mobile. When working with people on the street, you'd better remain true to your word, for once you break your word, that indiscretion will get around, and no one will want to have anything to do with you.

Nikki had more than finished three-quarters of the bottle, by the time we got back. She may have been an African American, but I suspected that her liver came from Moscow or Dublin. I helped her out of the car, where she then puked once. She apologized for puking, then used her garden hose to rinse-out her mouth, and I then helped her onto her

living room couch, wiped her face with a wet paper towel from her kitchenette, thanked her several times, then watched her nod-out. I left, she sunglasses and hat on a chair, and locked her front door behind me.

There were a few other things I needed to do at the lab, so it wasn't until later that evening, that I was able to return to Nikki's countryside house of horrors. A low heavy ceiling covering the moon and stars, no street lights, and no lights on in the house, the area was extremely dark. After driving past a couple of times with my high beams on, I saw there was no vehicle was on the premises. The street remained completely void of traffic, and seemed gloomy as that dirty little street in Mexico City, the night of which I still have trouble recalling. It was just after midnight, when I quietly coasted to a stop, parking about a mile away down a side road, between two unlit residences. *All these people go to bed early.* By parking on the street, but between the two yards, I was hoping that if my car was noticed by either homeowner, each might think I was visiting the other, ergo not phone the cops. There were no lights on in either house, so I figured they were asleep. Most country people tend to go to bed earlier

than those in the city. Once outside the car, I gently pressed my weight to the car door to quietly click it closed, then I silently jogged the mile back to the evil house.

By the time I arrived at the suspect's house, my eyes had somewhat adjusted to the darkness. The house still looked as if no one were home. Using my shirttail, so as not to leave fingerprints, I checked the mailbox by the entrance to the driveway. There was only one letter inside, but it was too dark to read the addresses, so I simply folded it over twice, and stuffed it in my back pocket, and quietly closed the mailbox, with the back of my hand. The driveway was dirt, so I walked toward the house on the bordering grassy yard, thereby not leaving foot prints in the dry dirt, definitely not wanting the reputedly dangerous man to see them and suspect that anyone had been there, snooping around. Deciding to do a quick recon of the backyard, I silently strolled around the end of the house. Stepping between two bushes, I quickly peeked, while noticing there was no vehicle. Going back to the front of the house, I put my hand inside my Auburn t-shirt to again protect against leaving fingerprints, and tried the front door, but it was locked.

In the dim light, I silently stepped down the front steps, back into the front yard and gazed-up at the house. That's when I saw the uneven shiny aluminum window frame. Upon closer inspection, I noticed that the edge of one of the windows and its frame had indeed been notably damaged, as if it had been pushed out, and then had been crudely jammed back into place. While the aluminum framing had been roughly bent back, some of the glass panes remained broken, nor did the frame fit flush with the house, all indicating that Nikki had probably been telling the truth. *Only a big girl could have knocked that entire window out of the wall.* Looking for a way to get inside the house, this time I walked around the other end of the house, in search of the back door, which Nikki had mentioned. I'd gently traversed half-way across the back of the house, when unexpectedly I heard a startling scurrying sound, along with a muffled low growl, gearing up for a full fledged bark. Then, I vaguely saw it, a huge overly muscled black or dark brown pit-bull was on a dead run, coming straight at me, from the neighbor's yard. *Oh shit!* Why the dog hadn't responded, the first time, when I peed in the backyard, I'll never know. Maybe he was sleeping, but it's hardest to awaken a dreaming dog.

As I turned to run, and the growl was still in the process of escalating, coming-up from deep in his throat, just behind what I knew were some very strong toothy jaws. The animal was about two hundred feet away. *Isn't it pit-bulls that have those jaws, which never let go?* I'd spun around and had just begun sprinting for all I was worth. Just as I figured things couldn't get any worse, an inexplicable pain shot through my right knee, ergo I was immediately stopped dead in my tracks, and the dog was about three seconds away. I'd only run about eight feet, when my right leg was stopped and painfully suspended a few inches off the ground by some unforeseen, mysterious, yet fairly painful force. *What the hell is going on?*

Looking down, at first, I didn't see anything. *What's wrong with my knee?* Still worried about the dog, I glanced back over my shoulder to see where the beast was, and simultaneously heard a muted 'yelp,' right when the bark should have come. The determined crazy beast had piled face-first into a nearly invisible wire mesh fence, separating the two backyards. In the dark, like the dog, I hadn't seen the fence. *The dog so intent on attacking me, it evidently completely forgot about the wire fence?* How that dog

had overlooked his own backyard fence, I'll never understand, but I thanked God for that fence.

Momentarily safe from the dog, I refocused my attention back on my painful right knee. Looking hard in the dark and using my hands, I discovered that one end of a three foot piece of rusty rebar was barely stuck into my right knee, against the right side of the kneecap. For some weird reason the rusty iron rod must have been stuck in the ground at about a forty-five degree angle. The rusty iron had only penetrated half an inch below the skin, but joint injuries tend to hurt like hell... more pressure receptors and naked nerve endings!

Gingerly pulling my knee free from the rusty metal, I then pulled the rebar out of the ground, reversed it, cleaned off the dirty end, and then using my body to block anyone who might be looking from the neighbor's house, I put the bloody end back in the same hole, to confound the evidence. I didn't want to just drop the rebar to the ground for fear the dangerous suspect might have noticed the change, and thereby accurately assume someone had been snooping around his house. The bar was so rusty that fingerprints weren't an issue. For almost a full ten-seconds, I stood quietly by the rebar, both because of

the pain and since the rebar would have made an excellent weapon had the dog jumped the fence, but oddly enough the animal completely lost interest in me.

Realizing that the dog's growl and small yelp might have alerted the neighbors, I walked over and sat with my back up against the side of the house, between two thick bushes for a good five minutes, just listening, and periodically leaning forward and looking at the neighbor's house to see if any lights popped on. I couldn't see my knee. Sitting there, I could feel the knee swelling slightly, so I repeatedly flexed to keep it from stiffing, after a couple of minutes, the pain eased back to about half. Looking around the bush, I could see that the dog seemed happy to just have frightened me. He was standing by the fence simply watching me, but no longer aggravated. *What a weird animal... one minute he wants to bite me, now he doesn't care.* No lights had come on next door, so I figured I probably hadn't been detected.

Being stabbed in the knee with the rebar, made me think of Knifeman in Mexico City, many years before, who had stabbed me in the other knee. *What is it about me getting stuck in both knees?* The next day,

I went to get a tetanus shot, lying to the doc, that I'd snagged my knee on a large rusty nail sticking out the side of a post; thank God doctors aren't into demanding evidence.

The back door to the house was also locked, but luckily the famous rotating crescent latch on the kitchen window wasn't fastened. After a little muffled light thumping and shoving, with the heels of my hands, I at last got the window to unstick and slid open. Taking my shirt off, I firmly and repeatedly wiped my prints, from the window surfaces, and climbed through, and into a large porcelain kitchen sink, while balancing on my knuckles, rather than my printable palms and fingers. Once inside, I noticed a horrible smell, something of a rotten metallic smell. Using my index knuckle, I briefly switched on the light and checked my wounded knee and to make sure that I'd left no blood on the window sill, sink, or floor. There was none and the bleeding had stopped, only a nine inch tract of thick dark dried blood, was firmly glued to my shin. Pulling the kitchen window closed, I again used my T-shirt to wipe-down the inside surfaces I'd touched. Still using my shirt, I then unlatched the backdoor, and cracked it slightly open, encase the

lunatic came home and I needed to make good my escape. Using the light of the kitchen, I made my way to the front of the house, opened the front door a crack, to further facilitate my escape, if I needed. Looking out the window, I saw that the neighbor's lights were still out, which I hoped indicated that either no one was home, or if they were that they were sound sleepers.

Going back to the kitchen, I used my knuckle to turn-off the light, and carefully made my way across the narrow hallway into the front of the house and saw through a living room window that no one had driven-up. Then, I rapidly went from room to room, just turning on the light switch, as I entered the room, surveying the room quickly, and then turning off the light as I left, always using the back of my hand to feel for the switch and a knuckle to turn it on and off. All the while, I kept my ears open for the sound of the approaching black van.

The first room I had checked appeared to fit the description, which Nikki had given me. From the inside with the light on, it was clearly apparent that the aluminum frame around the bedroom window had obviously been bent-out, just as Nikki had said. Two of the panes were damaged: one only cracked,

but one was broken with most the glass missing. The bent-up and broken venetian blinds laid piled-up in the corner. Most likely, Nikki's flight had ruined them. Indeed, it appeared that she had miraculously knocked out the entire window. Momentarily, I again remembered doing that slow roll through the flimsy window of the trap-house, many years before, trying to escape the police, with my pocketful of orange microdots. The window I'd busted through was nothing compared to the one Nikki had knocked-out. There was the bare mattress and box springs, several pieces of cut rope still on the floor, etc. The nauseating foul smell was coming from that room, yet I'd seen nothing which could account for horrible odor; still, I only gave the room a quick glance, before turning-out the light and moving on to the other rooms; wanting to see the entire home's interior, worried that someone might be hiding, inside. As Nikki had told me, there was no furniture in the house, except in that first bedroom, so after checking all the rooms, I returned to the room, with the mattress and boxspring, and switched on the light again. The smell was near stomach-turning, but as stated, there was nothing to be seen which would account for the stench.

The bare mattress and box springs looked fairly new, and were sitting on a cheap metal Hollywood bed frame, complete with small clear plastic wheels. Squatting down, I noticed on the floor under the edge of the bed, was a four foot piece of wooden two by four with a handle crudely craved into one end, but there was no blood on it. Being careful not to touch the homemade club, I got down on my hands and knees to carefully inspect it. The four long edges had been sanded somewhat smooth. The carved handle also looked to have been sanded. It was the kind of crude club a adolescent male might have made; nevertheless, it was a highly effective weapon, especially in the hands of a murderous psychopath. *I now have two weapons, if need be: the piece of rebar and this club.* Looking at wooden club, made me recall the morbid photos of Bella with massive bruising, and the autopsy report which had said that Bella had been severely beaten by a heavy blunt object, breaking bones and producing significant amounts internal bleeding. The pieces of cut rope, about four to six feet long, laying about the floor, were roughly a quarter of an inch thick, and appeared to be identical to the rope used to tie Bella's hands, in those ghoulish police photos. They were the pieces of rope Nikki had described seeing.

Being down on my hands and knees, looking at the club, is when I realized that the powerful smell was coming from the bed itself; yet, both the mattress and the boxsprings looked clean and new.

The horrible smell was making me want to leave. *What stinks so bad?* Where the bad odor was coming from had remained a mystery, but it seemed to be coming from the bed, yet the bed was apparently okay, and the only thing under the bed was the big wooden club, so I looked in the closet, but it was empty. On a hunch, I lifted-up the mattress and the corresponding blast of odor nearly made me vomit. On the underside of the mattress was what appeared to be a huge dried brown blood stain; it was looked like a gallon of blood was on the underside of the mattress. *Poor Bella!* This blood was probably owing to the killer's shoving the broken beer bottle inside her! He'd just flipped the mattress, and then he was set for his next victim.

The stench was too much, so I quickly released the mattress, properly repositioned it on the boxsprings, and immediately turned-off the light with my knuckle, and went back in the kitchen. For a few seconds, I just stood there, deep breathed, and listened, and waited for the nausea to pass. Odd as it

may sound, the overwhelming stink had seemed to have sapped some of my meager courage. I kept thinking that the lunatic was about to drive-up any second, and my only foreseeable weapons were the hand craved wooden two by four on the floor, under the bed, or if I could get to it, the piece of rebar stuck in the ground in the backyard. But fortunately, the gun-totting lunatic didn't show. With my shirt, I hurriedly relocked the front door and exited via the back door, using my shirt, to turn the catch that would make sure it locked, when I closed the door. The pit bull was still by the fence and content to just watch me, without barking. Hopping and limping, I watchfully made my way back to my car, and fortunately no one drove up the road. *What a creepy house!* After a few minutes of driving, I pulled into a well lit, busy convenience store, bought a coke, and used the soap and water, and paper towels in the restroom to clean the blood from my knee and shin, as well as to washout the small swollen wound. Sitting back in the car, I then reached into my pocket and fished out the letter, which I'd removed from the mailbox. Opening the envelope and unfolding it, I noticed that it wasn't actually a letter, but an accounting statement for a business.

The business was a place called, *The Porpoise Bar*. With the help of the heavy phonebook, hanging from a heavy wire attached to the convenience store's payphone, I quickly located the bar and within a few minutes had dropped in for a couple of beers. The bartender, who was an outgoing transplant from New Orleans, was quick to inform me that the bar's owner was a local lawyer, Erin Lippstein, and that Jack Lippstein, his son, managed the bar, during the afternoon shift.

"They need anyone to work here?" I pretended to be looking for a job.

"Not on my shift, but sometimes they need a bar-back, on the weekends. Can you bartend?" He asked.

"Sure! Been drink'n since I was a baby. What's this Jack guy look like, so I know who to look for when I come back for a job?" I inquired.

The bartender described Jack, the son, and his description closely matched, Nikki's description of the guy who pulled a gun on her and chased her into the swamp. The next question was who used the house of horrors to kill Bella, the father, Erin, or the son, Jack? If Nikki was right, it was most likely the son. That night, I drove home to treat my injured

knee with some hydrogen peroxide, a little iodine, and a small bandage.

The following afternoon, I took a two hour lunch break from the lab, dropped by a medical clinic, received my five dollar tetanus shot, then drove to *The Porpoise*. When I arrived there was no black van in the parking lot, so I put on some sunglasses, and ducked in the dark bar, ordered a draft beer from the cute little blond bartender, found the darkest corner to sit, sip, and I just relaxed and waited. After fifteen or so minutes, out from the back came evil Jack, the owner's son, the split'n image of the man, Nikki had described; but oddly enough, from all outward appearances, he seemed fairly friendly, at least toward the blond bartender, and the one patron sitting at the bar. At one point, he even gave me a wave, so I waved back, but for my own safety, I quickly looked down, not wanting to engage him in conversation. *His black van must be parked outside, now.* I needed to pee and knew it would give me a legitimate reason to go behind the building, incase Jack happen to see me back there, checking for his van. If he caught me, I'd just say that I avoided dirty public restrooms, because I can't stand their smell. Indeed, the black van was there, and I memorized

the license plate. Having finished, I zipped-up, got in my car, and left in such a way that if he looked out of the door to the bar, he wouldn't see my tag. You can't be too careful when dealing with sadistic murderers.

After work that day, I went to the YMCA, and was trying to get-in a workout, a little racketball and fifteen minutes with the heavy-bag. It was almost time to get in the shower, when I saw Dick Grossman, a truly rare man, in that, he was genuinely good, yet a practicing criminal defense attorney. He was a partner at the firm, founded by my Grandpa. After the usual greetings, I asked Dick what he knew about the solicitor, Erin Lippstein, Jack's father.

“Most of that family is seriously fucked-up, Joey. You don't want to have any dealings with them. Erin is great attorney, but a contemptible jerk, and his son, Jack, is one messed-up amazingly weird dude. Allegedly, Jack is a big-time drug dealer, and probably worse.”

“What is it that the son deals, and why is the dad a jerk?”

“Rumor has it, that the son deals in kilos of

heroin... big time. You see Joey, a few years back, the son got busted for it... more than a three kilos, in the trunk of his mother's car, that he was driving. Jack was just pulling out of a low rent motel, with some hooker, but he ran a stop sign, so a cop pulled him over. He was trying to behave, but it was obvious he was drunk, soused to the gills. He didn't use his product, but he is a big drinker. When they hauled him into jail for the DUI, the car got towed to impound and searched. Jack already had a sizable felony record, so there was no way, with three kilos of H, he was going to escape going to prison, and for lots and lots of years. Jack was going down for major dealing, cuz no one has three kilos for personal use, unless you're some kind of space alien. Jack works at his dad's bar. Very time I've seen him, he's had a drink in his hand. With that being Jack's fifth major drug felony, Jack was sure to be getting the *Habitual Offender Statute* nailed to his ass, and that usually means 30 years to life, all on the state's dime." The guys that work in the State's Attorney hate Erin, cuz he was know from rubbing his courtroom wins in their face.

"And Joey, you're gonna love this, so pay close attention to what I'm about to tell you! And, this is

why Erin is a jerk of stellar magnitude. He actually managed to talk his poor sweet innocent wife, Jack's very own loving biological mother, into telling the police that the heroin was hers, and that she'd left it hidden in her car trunk, and Jack had indeed been driving her car. That Suzy homemaker wouldn't know the difference between heroin and *Gold Medal* flour. Erin convinced his own wife that since she didn't have a record, she'd just get probation, and he, Erin, would rescue her. He told her that if she confessed to the heroin, he'd have her out of jail the same day. She agreed to the harebrained scheme, just to keep her scumbag son, Jack, from doing thirty years to life. That poor woman actually made a taped confession in front of the state, and with her own attorney present, who just happened to be good friend of Erin. The foolish innocent wife and mother just knew that her loving attorney husband, Erin, would immediately save her. Wrong!"

"Since she didn't have any previous record and didn't want to see her sweet weird baby boy go to jail for eternity, she ended-up spending a week in jail, followed by one year on house arrest, and five years probation, and for the rest of her life, she'll have a major felony record. The reason that she had

to wait a week to get bailed-out is that reprehensible reprobate she called her husband didn't bother to bail her out! The bail was high and the husband just kept lying to her, telling her that there was a bail processing problem, as if there is such a thing, and that he was working it out. Finally, her own parents had to wire the bail money down from New York City. Erin never intended on bailing his wife out. Her parents also had to pay for her legal defense, cuz Erin's good-buddy lawyer just dropped her, claiming he had some family illness, and the judge let him walk, without allowing her new attorney more time to prepare. For all I know, the judge may be buds with Erin."

"During this fiasco, Erin filed for divorce, using the wife's felony drug conviction as grounds. Since everything, including the bank accounts were in Erin's name, the wife got virtually nothing. She'd come into the marriage with some serious money, but left with nothing. In divorce court, Erin claimed that she'd been stealing from the family to feed her heroin habit, for years and apparently had recently taken to dealing to get the funds to support her growing habit. The poor woman didn't have a leg to stand on, since she'd had already admitted to dealing

three kilos worth of pure smack. She never divulged that she wasn't the dealer, and remained faithful to Jack, her drug-dealing son. Erin also told the judge that she was a conniving and pathological liar, and was the reason for his son had gone bad to begin with. She was forced to move out of her own house, so her house arrest was carried-out in a tiny one bedroom house her parents rented for her. She wasn't allowed to leave the state to live with her parents. Eric and his dope-dealing son, are truly a couple of low flying buzzards! Eric is the kind of predator that just looks at people as prey. And Jack may just enjoy killing."

"How do you know all this?" I asked.

"Attorneys love to talk about other attorneys, and most of what I told you is court record, anyway. About once a year, I'd go over to the Lippstein's Christmas party. I make my obligatory appearance, do a little jaw-jacking, say 'thanks,' then leave. Besides my wife has known Erin's wife, for years. Needless to say, my wife hates Erin and his son. That father and son are as cold as they come. You don't ever want to get to know their bad side. Stay away from Erin and Jack, Joey. Don't even think about 'em."

“So, the son’s as bad as his Dad, huh?” I foolishly prodded for more information.

“Sure is. The Jack’s definitely out in the stratosphere... dangerous looking guy. Tall man with a scraggily goatee. He’s a real creep. Looks like Hollywood’s idea of a psycho serial killer, but creepier than the fucking Norman Bates. At least Norman looked normal, but Jack’s a satanic looking bastard.” *True that.*

“You don’t happen to know what kind of vehicle he drives do you?”

“The son? He drives some kind of black van... looks like it’s been repainted with flat black, using a spray can. But listen Joey, you don’t want to mess with that family. Lippstein is far too well connected. He’s successfully defended a whole bunch of bad cops and at least half of them are registered assholes, so they’re all ready to kiss his fat white pimply ass at the drop of a hat. What you got going, anyway? Why are you so interested in those two?”

“Nothing definite, Dick... just heard some rumors that the son was being investigated for heroin dealing, like you said. But, I’m not even slightly interested in them. You know I don’t care about drug

cases, anyway. I guess I was just trying to make conversation, but thanks for the warning.” I lied.

“That’s okay, but you really don’t want to cross either of those two. They’re not to be messed up, Joey.” Dick warned.

“Got ya, Dick. Thanks for the heads-up. If I ever get in trouble, I’ll never call on Erin.” I promised.

The next day, I went to the local paper, *The Mobile Press*, to use the microfiche archives and look up the original report of Bella’s murder. The first article I came across had exactly what I was looking for... where the body had been found. The clump of trees, where Bella had been discovered by some eight year old boy, was just off county road seventeen. After consulting a map, I suddenly realized it was only a few blocks from Jack’s creepy house with the bloody mattress. The circumstantial evidence made it pretty clear, that Jack, was Bella’s sadistic murderer.

The way I read the evidence, unlucky Bella had been tied-down to the Hollywood bed frame, under the pretense of sex for hire, then savagely beaten with the carved two by four, perhaps even off and on for a couple of days, possibly repeatedly used for sex, then finally raped with the broken beer bottle, and

allowed to painfully bleed-out on the mattress. Come night, crazy Jack probably loaded her up in his evil black van, and dumped her body in the little clump of trees, just a few blocks from his house. Perhaps, he'd gotten scared about driving around with the corpse, so he dumped it in the first convenient location. He probably went home and cleaned-out the van with Clorox and the garden hose. He should have dumped the mattress and boxsprings, but wrongly figured he was safe. Whatever the exact scenario, the evidence strongly pointed at Jack as the killer. There was no doubt in my mind, that he was guilty, and my dear Grandpa wasn't around to help him. Thinking back, I should have quietly killed him. Just shot him late one night, when he was alone leaving the bar. Grandpa used to comment that you can bury anyone, with enough circumstantial evidence. In fact, he used to say that so often, I imagined that as a prosecutor, he had actually managed to get people executed and buried, on circumstantial evidence. I went downtown to report my findings to the cops.

Once at the *Sheriff's Department*, I climbed the stairs to the investigations department, the very epicenter of arrogance and hubris, and spoke to the

first available detective. They were largely smart men, but with disproportionately large egos. After giving a quick brief, on why I was there, the detective took me to an interrogation room, turned on a classic old reel-to-reel tape recorder, and put a small mike mounted in a V-shaped plastic stand on the small metal table in front of me. He then brought in two more cops, and the three listened to my story, while it was being taped. After I was done, they posed a few questions for clarification, and I matter-of-factly answered them. Oddly enough, the three detectives didn't seem remotely pleased with my revelations, and so without missing a beat, I lied to protect myself by saying that I'd already shared this information, with a half dozen people, who'd all suggested that I report it to the police. The last lie I told them was that I'd written a letter, describing everything I'd uncovered, concerning Bella's murder, and I'd given it to an attorney, to be sent to a federal judge in the event of my untimely death. After my conversation with the attorney Dick Grossman, I knew that I sure couldn't trust the cops. Especially since they were frequently represented in court, by Attorney Erin Lippstein.

The three detectives shared a couple of knowing

looks, then mechanically thanked me for my efforts, and I quickly exited the building. During the interview, I'd purposely omitted a few things. While I admitted that I went to the house in the country, I failed to confess that I'd committed breaking and entering, I said that I'd only looked through the window with a flashlight, and had seen the two by four with the carved handle, propped against the wall, instead of under the bed, where it actually was. In addition, I mentioned seeing the pieces of cut rope on the floor, but made no mention of the blood on the mattress, since considering the foul odor, I felt certain they'd find it on their own.

Lying, I told them that I smelled a rotten odor coming through the broken window, from somewhere in the house. Of course, I also failed to mention the pit-bull and the rusty rebar. Lastly, I said I found the business mail, already open in the street in front of the house, as if it had fallen out the trash can. I also left out everything about Nikki, and instead I said that I'd found a note on my car window, giving me the address to the house, and saying that it was where Bella had been killed. I just claimed that I'd somehow misplaced the note. The detectives clearly didn't believe that I'd lost the note,

but they couldn't really press the issue. They realized I'd stick with my lies. I was only in the room for fifteen minutes.

As I was leaving, feeling none to certain about the three detectives, the oldest one, Howard Miller, walked me out to the parking lot. He had been in the *Sheriff's Department* for over thirty years. Considering the amount of politics that Howard had no doubt endured, he had to have been an amazing guy. Stepping-up close to me, Howard said he wanted to give me 'an important piece of advice.'

"Joey, we've been looking at Jackass Lippstein for a long time. A lot of people in the *Sheriff's Department* know that he's a major heroin dealer, and weird as a turd in the prom punchbowl. We're also looking at him for a messy murder in South Florida, where we think he goes to get his supply of heroin. A body was found inside a storage locker in Miami, which wasn't air-conditioned. The owner of the body lived here in Mobile. It was missing a few parts, and Jackass was down there at that time, but I didn't tell you that. You're a scientist and operating outside your purview."

"Jack's lawyer dad is something of a local big wig and represents us cops in court, so things might

get a little sticky for you, if you get my drift. You need to try to not to get on the dad's radar, Joey. But that story you just told in there, might find its way back to him. See... some of the cops here owe him for their jobs. Hell, he's kept some of these idiots out of prison, so don't make too many waves around here, not just yet, anyway! That letter you wrote was a smart idea, Joey. It may be what saves your life." *Can't believe he admitted that. I should have a recorder in my pocket.* With the last sentence, in a dismissive manner, he raised a knowing index finger, turned on his heels, and left, with a wave over his shoulder.

For the next three months, I worked on writing a paper at the lab, discussing the various treatments for malaria, and so I didn't do any investigation stuff. The government had paid *Rocher Pharmaceuticals* \$400 million to develop the drug mefloquine, a derivative of the very old drug quinine. The military frequently has to contend with the deadly disease, since so many countries suffer with the infected mosquitoes, and our troops have to remain in-country, for extended periods. Unfortunately, mefloquine has some markedly undesirable side effects: permanent cardiac changes, blind spots in the retina, GI distress, dermatitis, etc.

After reading a couple thousand research articles, I stumbled across the fact there was an ancient Chinese herbal preparation called qinghaosu, cleared the infection within two days, without any significant side effects! The herb cleared the parasite to well, that there was no recrudesce from the liver. Also, the malarial organism couldn't form resistance to the herbal treatment, so I formerly presented these hopeful findings to a meeting of what was called the *Aeromedical Advisory Council*, made up of the top twenty-one docs in the Air Force. Amazingly, they rejected the herbal treatment, because of politics, and the minor fact that they'd already wasted \$400 million on the mefloquine. The health and welfare of the soldiers and pilots, receiving the malicious drug, was apparently secondary.

After all the dust settled the *Aeromedical Advisory Council* just combined mefloquine with the antibiotic doxycycline, in a feeble attempt to be able to continue using the toxic mefloquine, but at a slightly reduced dosage. As a result, our troops continued to sustain negative side effects: bullseye retina (blind spots in their vision), permanent changes in cardiac rhythm after being on the drug for more than seventy-nine days, digestive problems, nervous

disorders, etc. No big deal, they're only troops. The military doctors just follow directions. The generals and Big Pharma are certainly more important.

During the three months, I was working on the malaria drug report, nothing new had appeared in the newspaper, concerning Bella's murder. No arrest had apparently been made. Every-now-and-then, I'd drop by the *Porpoise Bar*, and Jack Lippstein was still working there, a free man. Being curious, I pushed my luck and went back to the *Sheriff's Department*. Oddly enough, after addressing a couple of the detectives, I was given no specifics, when generally the investigators would be quick to discuss things, and share their latest findings. Looking at their perplexed expressions, and remembering Dick and Howard's advice, I hurriedly left. Yet another month passed, and it had been four months, since I'd made the tape-recording about the house in the country, and still nothing appeared in the paper, and no arrest had been made, and Jack was still managing the bar. I wondered if the evidence was still in the house, but didn't again visit the place. Four months was more than enough time for Jack to have disposed of the mattress and box springs. All he needed to do was to load them in his van, along with the carpeting from

the room, drive them deep into the Alabama woods, soak them with five gallons of gasoline, make sure no one was watching, then torch them off, without leaving tire prints.

Rick Jacobs, was an older fellow in charge of the crime scene van. He usually ate lunch at a little restaurant called, *The Little Brick Kitchen*. The lab geek liked to eat there, not only because it had good food, but because it was further from the *Sheriff's Department*, ergo fewer cops ate there. Rick didn't have to drive a beat like a regular cop, and therefore had more latitude with his time, and that's how he could afford to drive the extra distance to eat at *The Little Brick*. The non-stop barrage of police politics would later force him to quit.

The claim was that Rick 'lost' drug evidence, which in fact, never existed. Three dirty cops ganged-up on him, and firmly claimed that they given him \$22,000 worth of drug money. The truth was that Rick failed to partake in profit-sharing from the evidence room. The three cops claimed that they'd turned it in, with all the other evidence. Rick was offered a choice: quit with a good write-up, or face the trumped-up charges, and no job in the future. Like other bureaucracies, crooked police

administration can always find a way to get rid of certain good people. In those days, Rick was the only crime scene guy they had, but back then, the department relied more on muscle, than on science. As stated, at noon I went to eat at *The Little Brick*, and true to form, Rick soon came in, and I motioned for him to join me.

For the first few minutes, we just talked about things in general, nothing about Bella, then I simply asked him if he'd had been to any bloody crime scenes lately, and so I easily found out that Rick had never been out to examine the gruesome house in the country! That meant that no one had seen the bloody mattress and nothing was being done about the murder. Most likely, the murderer's attorney-father had been forewarned by certain of the cops, and there was little doubt the evidence was long gone.

"Whatever happened to the investigation of the hooker murdered with that broken beer bottle?" I asked Rick.

"Nothing yet... Cops don't care about ladies of the evening. Everyone knows that."

At any rate, no action had been taken on behalf of Bella. To the contrary, it was pretty clear, that no

one cared about a prostitute hooked on heroin, and that the attorney dad's massive influence was protecting his wayward son, and his son's heroin business. It was also obvious there wasn't going to be an investigation for Bella, so prudent thought dictated that I give-up on Bella's justice, but not pursuing such a torturous homicide seemed weirder than *Pulp Fiction* on mushrooms, not to mention that it was morally wrong, and if an unethical guy like me can appreciate such evil, then.... *How can they just let such a morbid killer go free?* After yet another month passed, with still no results, unwisely, I went into the investigations department to again inquire about the case.

The cops weren't about to work extra hours or shorten their coffee breaks to investigate a tortured murdered junkie hooker. Howard Miller was there, but this time when he saw me walk in, he pointedly said he needed to leave, gave me a wincing smile, as he passed me by, shaking his head. Possibly, that was his way of saying, 'Don't be a dumb ass, and get the fuck out of here!' He walked out of investigations, and headed for the stairs. Then, a young detective stepped forward and requested that I walk out into the hall, so I wrongly assumed that I was finally

going to be told something confidential about the case. Instead, he placed his flat palm on my chest, raised an eyebrow, and dramatically spoke.

“Listen asshole, if you really want to know what’s best for you, then forget about the Lippstein case, and forget about that stupid dead junkie hooker. She was nothing but trouble for a lot of folks, anyway. You’re right we don’t care about investigating her murder, and if you like being on the upside of the dirt, you’d be advised just to forget about her! Bella is gone, and that’s that. Just let it be. She was nothing, but a God damned drugged-out dead hooker! This is your last warning. If you don’t stop, it’s not going to end well for you. Get me?” So ended his convivial diatribe.

“Sure, I’ll drop it. I can only imagine what has inspired you to quit the case, but as for me, the upside of the dirt remains better than the underside, so I won’t be bugging you, again. I’m certainly not an attorney with substantial wealth and influence, but just another Bozo on the bus, so I’m out of here.” I responded, then turned and went down the stairs.

Please allow me to introduce myself
I'm a man of wealth and taste

I've been around for a long, long year
Stole many a man's soul to waste

And I was 'round when Jesus Christ
Had his moment of doubt and pain
Made damn sure that Pilate
Washed his hands and sealed his fate

Pleased to meet you
Hope you guess my name
But what's puzzling you
Is the nature of my game

I stuck around St. Petersburg
When I saw it was a time for a change
Killed the czar and his ministers
Anastasia screamed in vain

I rode a tank
Held a general's rank
When the blitzkrieg raged
And the bodies stank

Pleased to meet you
Hope you guess my name, oh yeah

Ah, what's puzzling you
Is the nature of my game, oh yeah...

I shouted out,
Who killed the Kennedys?
When after all
It was you and me...

Just as every cop is a criminal
And all the sinners saints
As heads is tails
Just call me Lucifer
'Cause I'm in need of some restraint...

So if you meet me
Have some courtesy
Have some sympathy, and some taste
(Woo woo)
Use all your well-learned politeness
Or I'll lay your soul to waste, mm yeah

Sympathy for the Devil... Written by Mick Jagger and Keith Richards, and was the opening track on their 1968 album *Beggars Banquet*.

That detective didn't need to repeat himself. Clearly, it was past time for me to back off, and I sure didn't want to be laid to waste. When you're threatened and you can't clearly determine who all your enemies are, nor do you know how many there actually are, or when or where they'll be coming from, you must retreat. Anything else is tantamount to suicide. That idea felt like something Clausewitz or Sun Tzu might have suggested, or maybe I was simply ignoring my cowardice. Of course, Jack Lippstein never got arrested for Bella's murder, but this wasn't the end of his miserable story. The best part of this story was soon to follow.

The night after the detective's threat, I took a risk and again drove out to the house Nikki had shown me. As before the neighborhood was asleep, but this time I brought a gun and a flashlight. Even though it was dark, I wore a ski mask, incase there was a hidden camera. I didn't go into the backyard, for fear of riling-up the neighbor's backyard pit bull. Instead, I simply used the flashlight to look in the window, which Nikki had escaped through. There still were no blinds up in the window, but the window was no longer broken, and its frame appeared to be new. Not surprisingly, nothing was in

the room: no mattress and boxsprings, no Hollywood bed frame, no pieces of cut rope, no carpeting, and no wooden club. Unmistakably, it had been thoroughly cleaned... no apparent evidence, so all that remained of the crime was the photos of poor Bella's body. The tape I'd made with the three detectives probably no longer existed, and was likely ash in the bottom of Eric Lippstein's backyard barbecue, and I was tentatively an insignificant blip on his radar, who was only still alive, because of the spur of the moment lies, I'd told in the recording: the fictitious people I talked with about what I'd seen in the house, and the fictitious letter which was yet waiting to be sent should something happened to me. Lying and deceit are important survival tools.

A few weeks prior to my confrontation with that threatening investigator, Pretty Tommy, the pimp, and I were driving around and he'd shown me where Bella's mom lived, so after my second visit to Jack Lippstein's country house of horrors, I decided to pay her a visit. She lived in a small, but half decent trailer park, just outside of town, one mile northeast in the direction of Saraland. Before arriving there, I was praying that she was on her psych meds. Generally, schizophrenics are easy to get along with,

but sometimes not, if they've been off their meds too long, and feeling a bit psychotic. If they're flipping-out, the trick is to causally but subtly buy into enough of their delusions, that you don't become part of their paranoia/fears, and in so doing, the schizophrenic doesn't reject or hurt you, but instead views you as something of an understanding kindred spirit. Later, when they're properly medicated and relatively normal, and wonder why you confirmed their delusional fears, you simply explain, that it was the only way you could manage to get along with them at the time... no harm, no foul. Being a skilled liar, doing such is a snap for me.

Surprisingly, Bella's mom, Jeannie, didn't seem too strange, at least not that day. The living room of her trailer was clean and nondescript, except for a heavy burnt smell, which she said was some white sage she'd burned, claiming the sage smoke kept the evil spirits of her death mother out of her trailer. *Maybe I should burn some white sage in the Sheriff's Department.* She sat on an overstuffed flowered print recliner, which match nothing else in the house, but did look comfortable, while I sat on the red leather couch and we sipped room temperature cheap bourbon, straight from the mini-bottles, in the non

air-conditioned trailer. She'd gotten a complete unopened crate of the mini bottles from a liquor distributor, who'd stayed at her place, whenever he was in town. *Hope the whiskey doesn't screw-up her psych meds.* While there, I only saw the trailer's living room. While there I did manage to spot a few well known voodoo accouterments: she wore a moon ring, a lit black candle was on the coffee table, an actual human skull next to it (those are now illegal to own), and several crosses on the walls, two of which were upside down, etc. Later, Jeannie told me Bella's ashes were inside the blue vase, next to the skull.

Once sipping-on my second mini-bottle, I decided to fill her in about everything I'd discovered. I must admit, for a mother whose child had been murdered, and a schizophrenic, she remained fairly composed and focused listener. *Her meds and this whiskey are really doing the job.* Carefully, I told her nearly everything, but of course I left-out the gruesome aspects, concerning the autopsy. My account began with Tommy's party, and progressed onto what I'd found out from Shirley, Nikki, my visit to the depressing house of horrors out in the country, my visit to the bar, the newspaper article, which had placed the body close to Jack's house. I also told her

about my recorded statement to the three investigators, and what Dick, my attorney friend, had told me about Eric and Jack and the poor wife being arrested for the three kilos of heroin. In addition, I mentioned that after four months nothing had been done by the cops, as verified by my lunchtime discussion with the crime scene analyst, and finally summed it up with the threat I'd received from the detective, warning me off the case, and that after returning to the country house, I'd found it to be sanitized... no bad smell, no cut ropes, no bed, no carpeting, no club, no busted window, etc.

Throughout all of that, schizophrenic Jeannie hardly batted an eye and seemed to completely understand, and commiserate with my frustration. During my spiel, she occasionally nodded, and at the end, thanked me for my efforts, promising to keep my words confidential. Jeannie had consumed three mini-bottles, during my thirty minute visit, but never appeared even slightly buzzed. *She's has an elephantine liver.* The death of Bella probably left her tombstone sober, causing me to recall Evangeline's death, and all the whiskey I'd strategically swilled, for roughly a year, thereafter. Except for a small pot-belly, Jeannie was pleasing to the eye. She invited

me to stay for macaroni and cheese, more booze, and to watch an old Gregory Peck movie on TV, but as tempting as that sounded, I begged off with a lie about an appointment with a car dealer, and an apology for not getting her justice.

“Don’t worry Joey, what goes around, comes around. Jack’ll be get’n his, soon enough. You’ll see. My family has been following the way of the saints for centuries, and I remember all those lessons, as if I learned them this sunrise. It’s more than just being a practicing Santerian, and sometimes more than simply an eye for an eye thing. My beliefs bring more than practical results... I get eternal changes... spiritual changes... and that’s better than simple revenge! You’ll see.” She explained.

Since she was schizophrenic and the mother of a tortured and murdered girl, I didn’t press her to explain what she meant by the comment. I thought it was just schizo-babble. Jeannie walked me to my old car, and unexpectedly kissed my cheek. The kiss carried the lingering pleasant smell of whiskey, causing me to flash on the fact that many nights, when my mother would come home with Dad, from having been dancing at the base officer’s club, she’d lovingly lean-over my bed and kiss me goodnight,

while I pretended to be asleep, and I'd smell the pleasant odor of whiskey, Chanel perfume, and a little sweat. For that reason and more, I've always equated the smell of whiskey with love and comfort, but also, with the miseries of withdrawal.

"Well, you know where I live, Joey. Don't be a stranger... ya hear?"

"Thanks for the visit and the booze, Jeannie." I said, then closed the car door, and drove away.

The next day after work, I went to see Tommy and sexy Yuki. Again, I sat in the same big comfortable chair, which I sat in the night of the party, when first I spoke with stoned Shirley in her glittery silver clothes and high heels. Tommy and Yuki sat on the couch. Unlike Jeannie's trailer, Tommy's place was well air conditioned. I'd brought a fifth of *Wild Turkey* as a gift, so Tommy cracked the seal, while Yuki brought in four glasses. Cream had come out of the bathroom, and sat with me in the extra large overstuffed chair. Over drinks, I laid out everything I'd found out about Bella's murder, concluding the part about how I'd been threatened by the police, and my visit with Bella's mom. All three of them, were nonplused by the fact that the apparent murderer was not to be arrested,

and that I'd been threatened by the detective. Tommy asked for explicit directions to Jack's house, and the *Porpoise Bar*. Hoping he might be planning some kind of justice, I complied, and later drove him by both places. Oddly enough, Cream seemed to have genuine faith in Bella's mother and her voodoo skills. Cream also emphasized the fact that I should no longer pursue the investigation.

“We're used to the police and their ways. Those cops will kill you. It's the rich rednecks that run things here in Mobile, and they run a lot of the cops, too. Jack's daddy is one of the good-ole boy attorneys, and so no cop is gonna mess with him. And nobody cares about a hooker, Joey. You just need to be content with having figured out who killed Bella. But, you go nosing around anymore, and you'll end-up under the dirt... death by cop.” Cream said all this, while shaking her head, and then she slipped her hand under my shirt and pinched my left nipple, causing Yuki to smile, and my anatomy changed.

Cream was a caring beautiful light skinned black prostitute, with a lean yet sexy form, naturally pink lips and nipples, and long ringlets of shiny jet black hair. Rarely, had Cream put so many words together.

That was probably the longest speech, I'd ever hear her make, but then her words weren't her finest attribute, nor was it her immense beauty. It was her gentle kind heart. Too few compassionate people exist, especially in the world of prostitution.

"Cream is not lying, Joey. You know, I might just know who that asshole, Jack Lippstein, is. I'm pretty sure he's one the same guys, who occasionally supplies heroin to Jackson, Bella's drug dealing chubby little pimp... you know, Needle Dick. I don't like the guy, but we talk, now and then." Tommy commented.

"Well, if you're right, I wouldn't discuss this with Needle Dick."

"No shit, Einstein."

"If you feel like jumping, plan it in a vacuum."

Tommy did make lots of inquiries on the street, and found-out that evil Jack Lippstein had left Mobile, and unexpectedly gone to south Florida. Maybe Jack had decided to visit his supplier down there. Perhaps, he was just scared, since certain of the cops had probably told his dad that some people (the people I'd told and me) knew that he (Jack) was the killer. They probably played my recorded police

tape for Jack's dad. It would have been easy for Jack to get lost in Miami, especially if you speak Spanish. In those days, you could easily rent a room or a house, without showing ID; just make-up a name, and hand-over the cash.

Later that day at the gym, my attorney friend, Dick Grossman, who'd originally warned me away from Eric and Jack, had told me that rumor had it that Jack had hired a bodyguard. The personal bodyguard was probably a necessity, since there was no telling how many people hated Jack. If you're into torturing and killing innocent girls, while selling sizable amounts of heroin, there's a very good chance that you're eventually going to seriously piss-off someone. But for whatever reason, Jack was long gone. In Mobile, he was something of a shark in the heroin trade, but in Miami, he was probably more like a minnow.

About two months had passed, since I'd spoken with Bella's mom, when one afternoon, I again ran into Dick Grossman, my attorney friend, while working-out at the YMCA. He was on the rowing machine, the old fashion type with the large wooden arms. You don't see those machines anymore. As Dick huffed and puffed, I sat on a workout bench to

his right, doing a few curls with the dumbbells.

“You hear that Jack Lippstein’s dead?” He asked me.

“No! What happened?” I asked, pleasantly shocked.

“The rotten bastard’s body was found in South Miami inside a rusty dumpster, by a homeless woman, looking for junk in an alleyway... behind some rundown shoe store... just three blocks off the beach. There was a second dead body in the same dumpster; some guy I’d never heard of. *Probably the bodyguard*. Both of them had been poisoned, and had also been shot in the back of the head. Bunch of melted black candles were found on the ground in a circle all around the dumpster... The cops said the black candles were some weird kinda ritual... maybe Jack pissed-off some voodoo priest, down there. Lots of Cuban are into Santeria and voodoo.” Dick speculated. *He doesn’t know about Bella’s mom.*

Unlike Bella’s murder, Jack’s death was rigorously investigated, but even though his father was extremely wealthy, and several investigators had been hired to determine who had killed Jack, the son’s murder was never solved. There was small

doubt in my mind, who'd orchestrated the deed.

The poison, tetrodotoxin, was listed on the autopsy as the cause of death, not the bullet. Though most people know that it comes from the pufferfish, there is also a poison found in the triggerfish, which are plentiful in the waters around Mobile, yet this triggerfish toxin is slightly different, palytoxin. It can induce cardiac arrest. Jack's body was shipped back to Mobile. The day of the funeral, you would have thought that it was a saint, who'd died. There were about five hundred attendees, and it was held in Mobile's big prestigious *Magnolia Cemetery*. Traffic was backed-up for blocks, and true to form, it was lightly raining that day, so most of the well dressed attendees were using their black umbrella.

Sitting in the northeast corner of the graveyard, with my umbrella, from the *Dollar Store*, and a pair of crappy binoculars, I recognized that at least six cops were in attendance, four were in uniform and two were investigators, one of which was the asshole, who had threatened me and placed his palm on my chest, in the hallway of the *Sheriff's Department*. No hookers attended, even though many of them had probably shot-up Jack's heroin. Coincidentally, the rain stopped, the moment the grave-side service

ended. *It's sort of like God has been peeing on the service.* That same evening, Pretty Tommy threw a celebration party, at the same motel room as before. Jack's funeral was the unspoken occasion. Cream was my date, and Nay-Nay wasn't there.

Bella's mother, Voodoo Jeannie, came to the party and brought what she called, a 'Death Cake.' Knowing about her involvement with voodoo, and that Jack had been poisoned, I didn't eat any of the cake. She gave me a big slice, and I thanked her with a smile. She smiled back, and her hard brassy smile and squinting eyes tripped me out. I'm fairly sure her looking into my eyes was to confirm her involvement in Jack's death.

When she went to the lady's room, and no one was looking, I went outside, smeared a small dab of icing on my upper lip, scrapped the cake into a garbage-can, and covered it up with some of the trash. When she emerged from the bathroom, I forcefully distended my abdomen, and holding the empty paper plate in hand, told her how good it had tasted. Then, I mixed a drink, and sat in the giant comfy chair with lovely Cream. The light skinned young woman licked the icing off my lip, and laughed, since she'd been looking out the window,

and had seen me toss the cake in the trash. No one got sick or died, who ate the cake that day. Cream knew I was a bit on the paranoid side.

“You’re crazy, Joey. She’d never poison you. She likes you, too much. I see the way she’s been looking at you, but you’re my man, not her’s. Don’t worry, I won’t tell her you trashed her cake.” Cream stated.

“To me, she looks like maybe she’s off her meds. The room next-door is vacate. Let’s go check it out. I hear the bed is functional, and you’ve got a surplus of condoms. Besides, you’re just too beautiful for me to simply sit by, unless you want me to suffer with a case of blue balls!” I joked.

“What’s that?” She seriously asked.

“Really?”

The next day, we drove out to the beach. As a rule, she avoided the sun lit beach, since like Rosa, she enjoyed the fact that she was a light skinned black beauty and the brilliant rays of the Mobile sun were clearly counterproductive. Later, I found out that the night that Cream and I had stayed in the room, Bella’s mother with a handful of Mobile’s finest street walkers and a couple of fifths of whiskey, had gone to visit the cemetery. Jeannie had

sprinkled some of Bella's ashes on Jack Lippstein's new grave, and burned some black candles, across the top of the headstone.

The voodoo woman and the girls then said a prayer for Bella's soul, as well as Jack's soul, but with different destinations. But the prayers for Jack were in the form of requests, that the Lord to send him to burn forever in hell. After the sky began to lighten, they drove-out to the beach, and scattered the remaining portion of Bella's ashes along the shoreline, and in the Gulf waters. Try as I might, I couldn't get my head around the ashes on Jack's grave, and have never made sense of it. Some folks need a certain amount of mystery and serendipity, to deal with life's realities.

At Tommy's party, Jeannie had gotten pretty buzzed and rambled on about her past, in south of New Orleans, near Horsepower Canal. Thanks to her mother and father, she had some rather unusual spiritual beliefs. Supposedly, the house she grew-up in was out in the swamps, built up on pilings, out over the water, with a trap door in the living room floor, so drug boats could drive right under the house, and be quickly off-loaded, straight up into the house, then continue on north through the swamps.

There were no roads in the area, so the boat was their only means of transportation. The area was so heavily wooded there was no place for a police helicopter to land. At night, the small boats would run ten miles out into the gulf and retrieve the drugs from a waiting freighter, or from the occasional go-fast boat. Once the small boats off-loaded into the house, her family would then cut the drugs, reweigh the blend, wrap it up into kilo packages, for sale and distribution to various dealers along the Gulf Coast. And sometimes, if the weather was nice, they'd just take the drugs up river to Baton Rouge, and St. Francisville in their own boat, with a water tight false fiberglass bottom in the bow portion of the hull.

Occasionally, they'd ship the drug's in cars or trucks to Houston, Biloxi, Mobile, Pensacola, Fort Walton, Destin, and Panama City. As a result, Jeannie most likely knew some fairly ruthless and influential people in the drug trade. My bet is one of those people operated out of Miami, who had somehow given Jack and his bodyguard a poisonous present from Jeannie. Perhaps, Jeannie herself had gone down there and carried-out the killing. If so, Jeannie had done what the law and the courts couldn't manage. She'd brought justice to bare! After

all, Jack was an alcoholic, who liked to drink with people. More than likely, he didn't know that Jeannie was Bella's mom. Hell hath no fury like a mother, whose child has been tortured and bled-out with a broken beer bottle.

After I'd heard about the weird little grave ceremony, at Jack's burial plot, I dropped by the graveyard the next night with a flashlight. Sure enough, stuck to the top of the granite tombstone were five large dollops of dark reddish black wax, which had streamed down the new shiny smooth granite face. The melted wax also had been used to attach a small light blue paper origami swan to the smooth granite stone. Leaning in close with the flashlight, I could see that it looked like brown ink, or perhaps it was blood, had been used to write, "Miami," on one wing, and "Bella" on the other. At first, I started to remove the little folded swan, then decided it was a fine message for Jack's heartless father, if the bastard ever happened to drop by to pay his respects, but I figured the little paper swan would be destroyed by the next rain and the heartless father probably never visited the grave. Perhaps, the little swan spoke volumes. Later that night, Dad was smiling and standing under the wing of the shiny

DC-3.

“One evil drug dealer, and one body guard, are onboard and ready to be dumped, son. It’s a good thing the ocean’s so vast. Just keep ‘em coming, Joey.” Dad spoke.

Religion comes in plenty of sizes and flavors, possibly because there are so many varieties of gray matter, each with their own fully equipped set of hopes, fears, and imagination. Consequently, some people like the idea of the son of God being a killing warrior, while others like the son of God being a merciful pacifist. Then, there’s a lot of people in between those extremes. Some people even joy the idea of multiple Gods. The wisdom, mystery, and comfort of each religion somehow lend credence to its authenticity. Oddly enough, each and every believer knows that their particular belief is the only true belief. It seems to be nothing short of mind-blowing, that so much human effort has gone into discussing something of which we know absolutely nothing about... what happens after death. Humorously, there’s a very good chance that ‘nothing’ happens, simply glorious nothing! The neurons just stop firing. Just consider how many religions and Gods have been born and grown-up

around that scary post-mortem conundrum. The ego and various other parts of the brain no doubt fear death. I certainly do.

Just take a boat ride down the Nile and checkout the structures and statutes honoring the ancient Gods. Go to Greece and study the ancient temples. Look at the jungle ruins in, Peru, Mexico, Thailand, India, China, Vietnam, etc. Then, there's all those old giant cathedrals scattered around Europe, and the beautiful ornate mosques in the middle east. Many lay people, as well as priests, rabbis, mullahs, monks, ministers, nuns, deacons, shamans, etc., have devoted their entire lives to the after-death enigma. And of course, each and every one of them, definitively knows that their particular perspective, concerning death, is the only true position, and all the others folks are just wrong, or fools, or infidels, or non-believers, or idiots, etc. Billions of people and countless perspectives, yet so many know that their idea is the only correct one.

Just look at the countless discussions, the mountains of literature, and seemingly endless miasma of institutions, with their untold number of hymns, sermons, chants, mediations, and prayers, not to mention, the corresponding wars and the resultant

carnage. Every religion, has started various wars, even the Hindus and the Buddhists. People are still dying every day, because somebody's religious perspective doesn't match-up with some other person's. Or it can be something else, like greed which starts the conflict, but then religion comes in and intensifies and/or perpetuates the conflict. Though what is often politically chalked-up to religious war, is actually about avarice, or maybe it's just pieces of aggressive gray matter, and its repressed neurotransmitter levels. Some people just need a 'good' excuse.

Imagine there's no heaven
It's easy if you try
No hell below us
Above us only sky
Imagine all the people
Living for today...

Imagine there's no countries
It isn't hard to do
Nothing to kill or die for
And no religion too
Imagine all the people

Living life in peace...

You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us
And the world will be as one

Imagine no possessions
I wonder if you can
No need for greed or hunger
A brotherhood of man
Imagine all the people
Sharing all the world...

You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us
And the world will live as one

Lyrics to *Imagine* by John Lennon

Religion is sometimes not just hope for an afterlife, but it can be a convincing excuse, permitting those selfish and mean pieces of our overly aggressive gray goop to dump their supply of

neurotransmitter, and therefore feel good about doing so. How many times, has religion become the invisible vector for good ole fashion sadistic aggression. In this manner, various terrorists like: KKK members, Nazis, Palestinian hating Jews, white supremacists, Jew hating Palestinians, American hating Arabs, Arab hating Americans, etc., have found a convenient excuse to do what they like best... hate. For most normal folks, moral decision-making and self control involve the functioning of the dorsal and ventral prefrontal cortex, parts of the amygdala, and the angular gyrus. The corresponding longterm memories principally come from the hippocampus.

In the overly aggressive, certain of those areas may be damaged, or underdeveloped, or running low on their particular neurotransmitter. I suspect that this is too often the case in certain island nations, where there is not enough land, so people are overcrowded, aggression inevitably ensues, and only the most aggressive and strong survive. Aggression itself maybe found in circuits within and between the hippocampus and the amygdala. Testosterone is a mediating factor in aggression, and this is likely why most males, regardless of race, age, or culture, tend

to be more overtly aggressive than most females. In animals too, testosterone levels are strongly correlated with aggression. Reducing testosterone by castrating an alpha male may cost him his dominant social position; whereas, injections of testosterone can allow the animal to regain his alpha status. There is evidence in humans that high testosterone males are more likely to be aggressive. They tend to do well in professions which thrive on competition: CEO, board members, politician, or athletic career.

Several studies indicate that the neurotransmitter serotonin likely plays a role in mediating aggressive behavior. Mice with marked reduction in certain serotonin receptors are typically overly aggressive. Likewise, reducing serotonin levels in monkeys increases aggressive behavior, whereas increasing brain serotonin reduces aggression and increases peaceable interactions. Drugs which increase serotonergic activity reduce violent outbursts in aggressive psych patients. Correspondingly, people with a history of criminal violence show reduced levels of the serotonin in their cerebral spinal fluid. Certain chronic murderers, or war criminals, or people who cause wars for profit, might well be excellent candidates for careful stereotaxic surgery, where said circuits could easily be partially ablated, using a small discrete well-placed depth electrode. Although this sounds cruel it might be a better

alternative to life in prison or the death penalty. It may also be better than having our country and planet destroyed by overly aggressive profit-driven egotists.

Such a surgery would be designed to reduce destructive cruelty. Unlike the frontal lobotomy, the individual would still possess their cognitive faculty. They just couldn't generate abnormally large amounts of hate. Undoubtedly, those unpleasant circuits are more fully developed in some than in others. For a portion of these more belligerent folks, their aggressive centers are also connected-up with their *Septal Nucleus*, which drives, and is the very essence of, sex and orgasm. People, whose hateful aggressive gray regions are well connected with their *Septal Nucleus*, may be the world's serial rapists, and serial sexual murderers. They may be the folks that start wars, for sexual pleasure, not just profit. They may be the husbands that have to beat their wives to attain an erection. You've got to admit that while life's learned experiences make a difference, the basic inherent wiring has a lot to do with things, especially when it comes to the extremists. But again, by eliminating a limited portion of that dangerous aggressive circuitry, running between the hippocampus and amygdala, these serial-sexual bad guys might also become more normal. Admittedly, damaging another person's brain seems morally repugnant, but if done properly, said dangerous criminal, CEO, politician, etc., may be more normal, and become a good and contributing member of

society. This would not interfere with their cognitive prowess, as did the old frontal lobotomy. Throughout the history of humankind, it's very likely that such overly aggressive people, with their overly developed pieces of mean gray matter, have started the wars, mutilating and killing countless people.

Too frequently, the lesser educated segment of America's voting populace backs the more aggressive political candidate, the man who's quick to go to war. Part of this is owing to the fact that they themselves are probably overly aggressive, so they can relate to the politician. In ancient days, when we were nomadic tribes roaming the earth, some of such men were the necessary protectors and providers, but now days, because of technology killing is done quickly and on a grand scale... millions, but is still owing to the same greedy and aggressive pieces of gray matter. How many folks have killed people or died themselves in wars, firmly convinced they were doing the moral thing, because they thought that their religion condoned, if not demanded, it, or because they were blindly following some political leader with questionable brain circuitry?

Certainly, there is probably more to the genesis of a religion, than helping people to better deal with the fear of death, trying to control the sexual drives,

and offering a basis for law. Yet for many, if not most of the religions, those variables seem to be the major driving factors. The known list of Gods and religions is long.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/
List_of_religions_and_spiritual_traditions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_religions_and_spiritual_traditions)

Could it be that all the world's religions and other types of philosophical hoopla are 'primarily' owing to a few critical parts of the human brain tissue. Gray matter specially designed, or specially evolved, to make us fear death, to over indulge in sex, and to take things for ourselves and to hurt people that prevent us from doing so. It's odd that a couple of tiny pieces of gray matter may have played the critical roles in the evolution of all those religions and their complex spiritual paraphernalia. Teachings that have insinuated their way, into virtually every facet of a person's life, so as to better, control behavior, and justify every nuance of our meaninglessness.

What if it were true that all the religions of the earth were founded as a direct result of the activity

of those special pieces of gray matter? But if you allow your gray matter to think about that, how could it have been any other way, for indeed every thought is nothing more than cells firing? Every 'belief' is nothing, if not brain cells firing. What else could it be? Sure, the religions could have been established by well 'intended' people, but nonetheless, said people still possessed those pieces of gray matter, and presumed themselves well intended, when in fact intention is nothing more than neurons firing. Even the ancient people realized that dead people don't think, so they had to invent the concept of there being a soul, to make the afterlife a viable possibility. These religions are often tailor fitted to the minds of the people, who created them.

For example, it has got to be a terrible thing for certain women too have to live under the shadow of certain oppressive religions, forced to play the role of a second-class citizen, but if they're brought-up that way, they probably don't mind. In fact, they may like it, much as my black paperboys didn't seem to mind their oppressive poverty, for it was all they'd known. Generally, if someone is brought-up in a religion, it just makes good sense. They believe! This scenario applies to the most brilliant of people, for regardless

of how smart a person is, each person possesses limited gray mush, which equates to anymore things than IQ.

If that assumption, about those pieces of gray matter, happens to be true, then just look at all the sermons, films, scribblings, songs, poems, chants, rantings, prayers, and ravings which have been created by every belief! If the Koran or Bible and every other religious scripture were actually inspired by The Great Creator, why didn't The Great Creator bother to explain the things which science is now discovering? All the various Holy Texts, albeit filled with plenty of good old fashion wisdom, are grossly lacking in depth of knowledge about the universe and how it works. The all enlightened Creator could have at least alluded to certain scientific facts. Why not mention a few things about chemistry, and a few facts about basic physics, the nature of the universe, and physiology, not just something vague, where you have to stretch its importance and interpretation to make it seem like it contains significant knowledge? Pretty much everything in the world's various Holy Texts is just common sense, stories, advice, and ideas which almost anyone with normal abilities could have conceived of. Then again, some of the passages

are simply weird.

If two men, a man and his countryman, are struggling together, and the wife of one comes near to deliver her husband from the hand of the one who is striking him, and puts out her hand and seizes his genitals, then you shall cut off her hand; you shall not show pity.

Deuteronomy 25:11-12

Sure, I know that one excuse for not including scientific knowledge in a holy text might be that the people in those early times would not have been able to comprehend, the complex description, but so what? Why not simply and clearly explain such scientific things in the holy text? The level of science in all the holy texts combined is barely worth mentioning or considering. Why didn't the holy books mention that eventually stem cells might come into existence or that aircraft would one day come to pass? The physics of gravity. I know that there's some vague reference to engines going through the sky, but let's face it that not much of any kind of cogent description, it's just another thing which is desperately lacking in clarity. Why do the supposed holy books largely stick to things as: fables, moralizing, philosophizing, talking about how great

the creator or the angles are, promises of eternal life, and threats of hell? Let's face it, a small group of normal uninspired adults could have easily contrived the ten commandments. All ten commandments are pretty much common sense. Why not better describe the nature of the creator's creations... in effect, what is called science? Why don't religious texts explain things like: DNA, the radio, medicine, biochemistry, black holes, viruses, telecommunications, electromagnetism, the true nature of time and space, the properties of light, fluid dynamics, the nature of oxidation, protein synthesis, membrane pumps, Lamarkian and Darwinian evolution, how stars burn without oxygen, how memory is created in the brain, why we dream, why farts stink, etc. It's more like these things just didn't matter, but if there is a great creator, then those things were/are his creations.

Holy texts have been drafted by wise, and perhaps a few not so wise authors (look at the above quote), who didn't know much, if anything, about the actual nature of the universe, astronomy, biology, the environment, chemistry, physics, medicine, etc. If God had a hand in the creation of those various holy texts, that God wasn't too forthcoming about the nature of his own creations. Then again, perhaps

there is no great creator, at least as the various religions claim God to be. All those texts were simply written by humans, and maybe humans with a bit of an agenda and imagination, according to the whims, fears, hallucinations, and desires of their particular gray matter. After all, the various holy texts are indeed hand written.

Why isn't there any better descriptions about heaven, paradise, or eternal life, with some explicit detail? If paradise were a resort town, no one would want to go there, because little if anything is adequately described. The big drawings cards are that you're always happy and you can't die. Paradise is too vaguely described. Regardless of the holy text, paradise is only described in terms of a few earthly things (streets of gold, jeweled gates, milk to drink, gardens, green fields, that all pain, suffering, and tears are absent therein, no sadness or sorrow, etc.). Some Holy Books even mention that paradise will have such things as food and drink, gold jewelry, fine clothes to wear. If you live forever and you're happy, why would you care about jewelry or fine clothes? For that matter, I don't care anything about jewelry and fine clothes, now. And, I don't much care for milk. If you can live forever, why is there still a need

for food and drink? Wonder who the clothes designer in heaven is, Gianni Versace? Rivers and gardens are okay but I prefer the beach, *Disney World*, and skydiving, and in heaven you could safely jump, without a parachute. If the holy texts are in truth the words of the great creator, why did the creator leave out so much? I'm sure if you're a true believer, you've got a reason why these statements are of no consequence. And, if things seem really illogical, then it's time for relying on faith. Even novels do a better job describing what a trip to the Caribbean is like, than the holy texts describe paradise. Perhaps, it's because we are too ignorant to understand the nature of paradise. Rationalize the shortcomings of your favorite holy text, however you please. Or maybe, the great creator just wants it to be a mystery, or doesn't think such things are worth describing in significant detail, or it's simply best for us to not know. It might spoil us. Perchance, paradise just may be indescribable... whatever makes you comfortable. On the other hand, hell is pretty straight forward and clear, except for the fact that the human body can only actually burn for so long. But, in the minds of believers that doesn't matter.

Supposedly, every kind of beauty and blessing

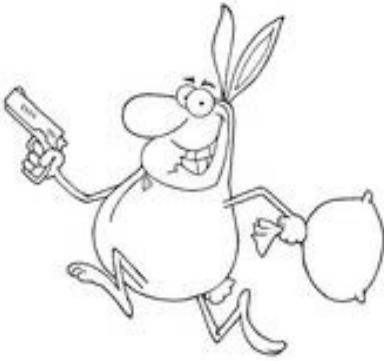
exists in paradise and will be revealed with a perfection never seen or known before; again, no real detailed description. God has prepared such blessings as a gift, and these will be offered only to people with whom he is adequately pleased.

Three pieces of gray matter, equating to pain, fear, and bliss seem to influence the creation and realization of heaven and hell. Psychological pain seems to be in parts of the thalamus, anterior and posterior cingulate cortex, the prefrontal cortex, cerebellum, and parahippocampal gyrus. Actual physical pain involves the primary and secondary somatosensory cortexes, as well as the anterior cingulate cortex and the insular cortex. The central nucleus of the amygdala, is involved in creating the fear of harm and death. As mentioned, the piece of neurology which in effect is sexual arousal and orgasm, is the wonderfully exciting, Septal Nucleus. These brain regions which have no doubt played a big role in the creation of various holy texts, also better insure the survival of the individual, and the latter makes sure the individual procreates, so that the ever selfish DNA continues forth. As mentioned, quite possibly those brain regions have been the primary driving forces behind most of the

world's religions. How could they not be. Hence, just consider what that says about the importance of DNA.

Parts of the brain also realize that to fear death is somewhat futile, and that sexual feelings are lots of fun, but in some ways foolish to the more logical parts of the brain. Of course, love figures in there somewhere! But undoubtedly, like everything human, love is nothing but the firing of various neurons, which are somewhat different for everyone; certainly without the brain, there is no love. Again, as unromantic as it may sound, love is only the firing of lots of brain cells. A dead brain loves nothing, nor does it fear, or procreate. How is that for an unromantic and cold interpretation of reality? Not enough serendipity for you? Well then, just pick out whichever religious text spins your beanie and begin to read and pray. In no time flat, it'll seem like the truth, and then you'll know the truth, and that all the other religions are ridiculous.

[OBI!]



THE ROBBERY

Subsequent to shooting-up the van with Tommy, on the night Cream had been punched in the face, taped-up, and kidnapped, I borrowed a sledgehammer, smashed, and broke-up the gun I'd used, then disposed of its pieces into various remote parts of Mobile Bay. I'd gotten the pistol at the Mobile flea market. Being overly paranoid and worried that a bullet might be recovered from the burned van, and be matched-up with my weapon, I first used a thin rough rat-tail file to ram up and

down on the inside of the barrel, then bent the barrel and flattened it with the sledgehammer, and used a cold steel chisel to destroy the telltale firing pin. Before deep sixing the pieces in various parts of the swamp, I dropped them in a mixture of paint remover and gasoline, to destroy the gunpowder residue and fingerprints. Call me paranoid.

The palm-to-the-chest threat from the clearly corrupt detective, concerning Jack Lippstein's murdering of Bella, was not to be ignored, ergo for safety's sake, I again took to carrying another pistol, a plain six shot snub-nosed .38 revolver. I'd purchased the gun at the Mobile flea market, and took it to the woods to test fire an entire box of fifty rounds. Though it was worn and the grips were cracked, it was solid and worked well. In those days, any individual at the flea market could buy and sell guns, without any kind of license. Although the laws haven't changed, the rules at the flea market have, and now you can't sell guns there.

People used to buy and sell rifles, shotguns, and pistols like they sold shoes, candy, and junk jewelry. Who knows how many people had owned that pistol, before I did? And, even if the flea market salesman had been the register owner, which was highly

unlikely, he didn't know my name, and since I look fairly nondescript, it was also unlikely that he could remember what I looked like, especially since I wore sunglasses and a baseball cap, when I purchased it. So, many of the flea market guns were essentially untraceable. There were no cameras at the flea market, no IDs were exchanged, people only used first names, and no receipts were written. At the flea market, I always used a fake name.

If I was worried the gun might be stolen, all I had to do was to call the police department from a payphone, and tell them I was thinking about buying a gun, which some guy at the flea market had shown me. I'd tell the cops I'd memorized the serial number, and ask them if they would please run the serial number. Back then, the police would gladly run the check, and give you the results, over the phone. Of the few times I did that, the guns weren't listed as stolen, or involved in any crime. If you called the police these days, with such a serial number request, they'd probably track you down, and interrogate you for a week. Times have changed... more and more big brother tightens his grip.

If it turned out that the gun had been stolen or had been used in a crime, I would just have told

them that I'd let them know, if the guy ever again showed-up again at the flea market with the weapon, and gave them some arbitrary description of a fictitious guy, and then I'd have simply destroyed the gun, and thrown the pieces in the bay. Now, people at the flea market will just step off the property to sell a gun, or they'll exchange phone numbers, and later meet-up somewhere else. If the government had its way, it would know everything about everybody. It's always amazed me that those people, who consider themselves to be liberal, want to let the government take away the right to bare arms.

Not long after buying the pistol, I more or less used it, when a robbery was committed, and still a second time, when a black woman was being savagely beaten, by a monstrosly large and powerfully built black man. The phrase 'more or less' is quite appropriate. In both cases, I didn't have to shoot anyone, but came close, both times.

In the days before cellphones, around midnight on a Saturday night, I pulled my old pickup off Howells Berry Road into a local convenience store, to use the pay-phone, bracketed to the store's exterior brick wall. While talking on the phone, I suddenly heard a high pitched eerie wobbling wail, coming

from inside the store. Peering around the edge of the wall, and through the store's large front windows, I saw the terrified slim young jet black store clerk, shaking in the harsh lights. She was standing, with her hands raised above her head. Her head was bent forward, gazing straight down at the floor, refusing to look at the large black sinister pistol, pointed at her finely chiseled ebony face, by a tall lanky masked white man, just on the other side of the counter.

The terrified clerk's delicate frame was violently quivering. Her behavior lent new meaning to the word, panic. The pretty little clerk was just shaking her head from side to side, as if she was disavowing the reality of the gun. The strangest thing about the scene was the garishly reddish orange ski mask the robber was wearing. Otherwise, he was dressed in black: pants, shirt, and casual rubber soled shoes. *Why would he dress in black, then wear a bright orange ski mask?* Both the tiny trembling clerk and the robber, looked unworldly in the stark fluorescent lights.

The bandit was frustrated that he was unable to persuade the panicked young clerk to open the cash-register. Despite his loud yelling, she just continued to stand with her hands over her head, her face

looking down, and her thin body shaking. He screamed his carefully crafted holy manta, at least four times, “Open the fucking register, you stupid bitch.” Nevertheless, the clerk remained too detached, trembling like an aspen leaf in a stiff breeze, while hypnotically gazing down at the floor, shaking her head from side to side. *The idiot’s yelling is just freaking her out.* She just continued shaking, while never taking her eyes off the floor. *She’s afraid to look at the gun, and paralyzed with fear.* Since he was plenty big enough, I wondered why he didn’t just grab the little cash register, yank-out the plug, and run away with it. *This is his first robbery.*

The young girl remained completely dysfunctional. The three dumbfounded customers just stood immobilized, spaced out about three feet apart, and looked like blinking mannequins, with their shoulders up by their ears, as if by doing so, they were protected against being shot. Likewise, I too was stunned, and merely stood still, watching from outside, waiting to see how the drama was going to play-out. Idiotically, I had the payphone’s receiver in my hand, yet I didn’t think about calling for help. I was mesmerized by the unexpected scene. Oddly enough, I had no significant fear, but just

watched the robbery, as if it were a movie. It was the first and only time, I'd actually see a robbery. The harsh glare of the store's florescent lights had turned the drama into something surreal.

Two-seconds later, the robber lost his cool, raising the heavy black pistol high in the air, he whipped it down, hard onto the left side of the chocolate brown clerk's tiny worrisome face. She was still shaking her head, and her face had just swiveled to the left, just as the heavy black barrel came down, smashing into her cheek and jaw. What struck me as odd about the blow was how quickly the clerk went down. One-second she was standing, then a fraction of a second later, she was gone, vanished from sight below the store counter. It was so fast, that she seemed to have literally dematerialized, just as fast as the heavy firearm completed its' downward arc. He'd hit her out of frustration. Of course, hitting the clerk accomplished nothing and was completely unnecessary, just one more illogical piece of overly aggressive sociopathic gray matter, going unchecked and having its way.

Dropping by the store later that week, I found out that her jaw had been shattered, and would require three surgeries to put it back together. Her

health insurance, which had been regularly taken from her paycheck, paid for that, but not for the dental part of the injury; five teeth were lost... three upper...two lower. The young clerk couldn't afford to replace them. Dental implants back then cost a fortune, and are still overpriced, just like all medicine in the United States. Still, she didn't even get the money for a couple of bridges. She was also left with a sizable scar, where the gun barrel had split open the flesh over her left cheek bone.

After laying waste to the slim gentle black girl, the tall angry halfwit robber simply leaned over the counter, and began banging his open hand on the register buttons, and miraculously, the cash drawer popped open. He then reached in and snatched out a few greenbacks, jammed them in his front pocket, and headed for the door. Somehow my entranced brain had not only overlooked phoning for help, but had completely forgotten about the .38 revolver was in my right jacket pocket.

The cretinous robber exited the front door, stopped and turned to his left and looked directly at me for about a two count. Like a fool, I just returned his gaze. He didn't attempt to rob me, nor point the weapon at me. No doubt, he was feeling some time

pressure. The bright lights of the store's overhang allowed me to plainly see the pale white skin around his eyes. His light blue eyes, framed by orange eyelashes, momentarily surveyed my face. *He's got to be Irish.* Stupidly, I just continued staring.

No doubt fearing the cops might show-up at any second, the robber turned and quick-stepped toward the getaway car, which was backed into the adjacent weedy lot. Until that moment, I hadn't noticed the big car, just sitting there, with its' lights on and engine running. The unkept lot contained a small abandoned mold-covered cinderblock building, surrounded by some fairly large untrimmed camellia bushes. The rear of the big sedan was pointed at me. A blond female was looking through the rear window. The interior light was on, since the passenger door was open, awaiting the robber's return. *She's hot... wonder if this robbery was her idea?* What looked like, a white *McDonalds* fast food bag had been carefully flattened and tucked behind and over the car's license plate, thereby concealing the numbers. Looking at the covered plate, caused me to recall Joseph Paul Franklin's shooting of the two young black guys at the park, where I'd forgotten to look for the license plate, years before. *At least, I've*

remembered to look for the tag number, this time.

Maybe the couple had recently eat'n dinner at *McDonalds*, where they planned this fiasco, over a *Big Mac*, and fries.

Recalling that the robber had viciously clobbered the poor clerk, I mistakenly thought that perhaps I should try to restrain him. So when he turned and started to walk toward the car, my weirded-out mind stupidly concluded that since he had on a ski mask, which covered his ears, he might not be able to hear me quietly running-up from behind to tackle him. With the arrival of that idea, the robber had distanced himself about twenty feet from me. I still had failed to remember the snub-nose pistol in my jacket pocket. In that particular emergency, my brain just seemed to go with the flow, no panic, but no solid reasoning, either.

Sprinting hard and low, I was aiming to tackle him by hitting him with a solid flying body blow right to the back of his knees, just like I'd learned playing backyard football, and seen on TV countless times. By hitting him in such a manner, my hands and arms would be free to get a grip on the gun, while he was falling, but as it turned-out he quickly heard me coming, and when I was yet ten feet away,

he spun and trained his gun on my face. *Oh, shit!*

“Hold it right there, asshole, or I’ll blow your ass away!” He bellowed, the effective double-ass dictate.

That gun is scary. The fear that the gun elicited was palpable, but my brain still wasn’t in gear. The robber sounded fairly serious, and I believed him. Consequently, I just said, “Okay man,” then turned, putting my back to him to walk off, and allow him to leave. As I turned away, out of habit, I jammed my hands into my jacket pockets, and low and behold, that is how my right hand discovered the forgotten pistol. Without conscious thought, my hand grasped the weapon, smoothly sliding my index finger through the trigger guard, and wrapping my other fingers around the gun’s wooden handle, resting the pad of my thumb on the hammer to make sure it didn’t snag on the fabric of my pocket, when I pulled the weapon. Yes, dear reader, that’s how idiotic I was! I’d completely overlooked the gun, and found it by accident. As the gun was clearing my pocket, I was cocking the hammer, and had trained it on the robber, as my thumb had returned to the gun’s grip.

In my unskilled opinion, the .38 snub-nosed is a great choice for a street gun; it’s easily concealed, powerful enough, easier to get trained back onto the

target after firing, than is the .45, and nothing is more dependable than a wheel gun... not prone to jamming, as are the automatics. The revolver's only draw-back was that it was limited to six shots. The most undependable variable in that situation was my brain. As my hand found the gun, and pointed it at the robber, the girl getaway driver loudly screamed for him to get in the car.

“Get your dumb ass in the car, Burt! Jesus, come-on honey, hurry-up! Let's go, now!” *His name is Burt.*

As I was grabbing the gun and she was yelling, I heard the scrapping of his shoe soles, as he pivoted back toward the getaway car, so I knew his back would again be toward me, giving me the opportunity to get the drop on him. I was aiming the gun directly at Burt's solar plexus... more mass, less chance of missing. *Let's see how you like a gun aimed at you, asshole.* Not feeling very creative, I borrowed the same double-ass phrase, he'd yelled at me.

“Hold it right there, asshole, or I'll blow your ass away!” I yelled.

The copycat words flowed passed my lips with a tiny chuckle at my own lack of originality. The small laugh gave me false confidence. A part of me didn't

care if he took me seriously, since there was a tiny group of neurons, just wanting to pull the trigger, especially since Burt had smashed the gun into the tiny clerk's face. *This dude needs a bullet.* Clearly, I felt the urge. Except for the type of weapon, and the target, the situation seemed a bit like the pigeon shoots in Spain... speed and accuracy.

Burt had heard me cocking the weapon and my use of his elementary phrase. The robber stopped and was still about five feet from the open car door, when he froze. We were separated by less than a dozen feet. He only swiveled only his head to look directly at me, but the front of his body still faced the open car door. *If the gun swings in my direction, I squeeze the trigger, repeatedly.* The good-looking blond saw me, and succinctly summed up the situation.

“Oh shit, Burt!” *Burt's on his own.*

Burt's massive blue-black pistol was still in his right hand, and thankfully pointed straight down at the ground. My right index finger was already applying a minimal amount of pressure to the trigger; not enough to free-up the hammer, but just enough to compress the softer tissue in the tip of my index finger, wanting every advantage I could get. It sure didn't take Einstein to figure-out, that in that sticky

situation, the smallest fraction of a second, could make a critical difference. By then, my mind was finally engaged, and anticipating the possibility of my missing the first head and having to quickly squeeze off a second and third into the main mass of Burt's body, and so I was prepared.

There was also the possibility that the female driver was armed, and could come climbing out of the car blasting away, or throw the car in reverse, and try to run-over me. I had preprogramed myself for those possibilities. All I had to do was move to the right about five feet, and there was no way she could hit me. Women are often fine shots, and the robber was certainly her boyfriend or husband, for whom she might feel predisposed to kill me. Had I heard her car door open, meaning she was getting out, I would have immediately shot Burt twice, regardless of where his gun was pointed, so that I then could better deal with her.

At that instant, I realized Burt was trying to decide if he was fast enough to shoot me. Most likely, Burt was wondering why I hadn't produced the pistol to begin with, and this strange realization caused me to chuckle, yet again. The thought drifted past, that the small laugh might encourage him to shoot,

thinking I was distracted, and so I spoke-up, calmly and not too loudly.

“Don’t try it, Burt. I’m fast and only have to barely squeeze this hair trigger, and you’ll be dead!”
It’s not a hair trigger, but that sounded good.

Did I really just say that? Thinking back, I should have used the famous Harry Callahan line in the *Dirty Harry* movie... ‘*Go ahead, make my day.*’ But what I failed to do, was to include some sort of instruction, like...

“Throw away the fucking hand cannon shit-head, and lay facedown down on the ground, or you’re dead meat! Do it, now! Toss it, and kiss the dirt! And, tell your girlfriend to throw-out the god damned car keys.” I should have yelled.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mev xenJ6Mtc)

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It was an attention grabbing parity, where we were riveted into the deadly game... both of us were completely in the present, not thinking about the past, or what the future might hold, just solidly locked into the tenuous moment. The timelessness of

the event, that made me feel clear-headed, and alive. Thinking back, I don't think I really wanted him to go for it, but I was comfortable with killing him, if he did; although, comfortable may not be the best word. It seemed that I was even aware of the air touching my skin, my breathing and heart beat, my bodyweight on the balls of my feet, the weight of the gun in my hand, the gun in his hand, the pressure I was applying to the trigger, his contemplation of my gun, and I was totally okay about leaving the next move up to the Burt, as long as the girl didn't open her car door. I'm far from a brave man; still, at least for that bit of time, there was no fear, since I realized that fear would have reduced my likelihood of survival. *He'll be inside the DC-3, tonight.*

Thinking back about the standoff, it's hard to say, who had the advantage. It might have been a 50-50 proposition, for even though I had the drop on him, and was aiming dead at his head, he had the option of reacting first. A moment before that situation, I had been engaged in a telephone conversation, so inconsequential that now I can't remember, with whom I was speaking. Then suddenly, I was in that life and death standoff. *I like this!* If his gun had moved even slightly in my

direction, a series of nerve impulses would have been headed for all the motor units in the flexor muscle operating my right index finger. That's when I recalling my basic anatomy, the flexor digitorum profundus, flexes the metacarpophalangeal joint and distal interphalangeal joint.

If he had been extremely fast, the situation could have resulted in a dead heat... literally. Looking back, almost everything I did at that robbery was complete foolishness. Discernibly, I lacked professional training, and displayed not one iota of common sense, but who cares, I was living, and swilling life's finest elixir, adrenaline. Besides, what's one or two lives in the grand scheme of things? At least, that's what your average sociopath might think.

Things suddenly started to change, but instead of his pistol hand swinging toward me, as I'd been anticipating, his knees began to bend, ergo I realized Burt was about to make a leap for the open car door. Simultaneously, his pistol had begun to swing outward from his body, not toward me, but toward the open car door. Without a valid reason, I wasn't going to shoot Burt. After all, Burt hadn't shot me. *Should I let him get away? Still, Burt had smashed that*

poor clerk's face and jaw. It was a moment where whimsicality and reason collided, and so without thinking, my body simply reacted.

Simultaneous with his knees barely straightening, to initiate his jump for the open car door, I snap fired a round through the right rear fender of the car, hoping no hostage was tied-up inside the trunk. The wheel gun was loud enough that my ears instantly rang, yet I could still hear the female get-away driver screaming.

“Oh shit, Burt! Shit, Burt! Shit, shit, shit!”

Revolvers are typically louder than automatics, which gives the shooter of a wheel gun a decent psychological advantage. Burt was in the process of executing his uncertain jump, but the sudden loud sound of the gun adversely affected the strength of his legs, so that when he did jump, he jumped too hard, but without bending-over enough. Consequently, the top of his head slammed into the car's metal roof-edge, just above the passenger door. The hard steel edge smashed into the top of Burt's skull. *Jesus, that had to hurt!* Immediately, I'd brought the gun back to bare on Burt; just incase, he decided to try to shoot me. The blow to his skull had failed to knock him out, but was clearly painful, and Burt was

momentarily dazed. *Perchance he has a concussion.* Clumsily, he fell to to his knees on the, with his pistol still in his right hand, but pressed down into the dirt and grass. From his hands and knees, again Burt lurched-out toward the car, securing a two-handed grip on the bottom portion of the car's front passenger seat. This caused the gun to thump-down onto the car's floor. The female screamed more orders to Burt.

“Get the fuck in the car, Burt! Hold on to that seat, Baby! Fuck it, I’m hit’n the gas, Baby!” The pretty blond screamed, as she violently stomped the car’s accelerator.

Only the upper one-third of Burt was inside the car... his arms, shoulders and head. The majority of Burt was still well outside the car, as the big V-8 responded, and the tires instantly began to kick-up dirt, gravel, and grass past me. The getaway car shot forward, dragging Burt’s carcass across the abandoned lot. He was trying to get his feet under him to be able to jump in the moving car, but the car was moving much too quickly, so his feet simply slipped, yet his grip on the passenger seat remained true. Rapidly gaining speed and flying toward the street, the car side-swiped a substantial camellia

bush. As a result, Burt's open passenger door viscously collided with the large sturdy untrimmed bush, and the door was slammed across Burt's back and ribs; much like a heavy-duty blunt guillotine, causing Burt to scream-out a string of four letter expletives, yet commendably, Burt still maintained his grip on the seat.

He's got to have some broken ribs. To add insult to injury, as the car flew out of the lot, having cleared the high inclined curb, it appeared to be briefly go airborne. But then, car suddenly dropped-down onto the asphalt road, with sparks shooting-out from somewhere under the car. As a result, Burt's legs first flew upward a few feet, and then his knees came crashing down hard, onto the unforgiving black Macadam of *Howells Berry Road*, eliciting yet another series of loud screams. *There goes his kneecaps and all the skin covering them.* The robber was getting what he deserved: his skull was very likely cracked from the roof's steel edge, his ribs and back were seriously traumatized by the bush slamming into the passenger door, and then his kneecaps had been smashed into, and abraded by, the hard blacktop. Later, I'd find out that all those injuries to the robber and to the store clerk, had been carried out for a mere seventeen

dollars from the cash register.

With Burt's knees still dragging along *Howells Berry Road*, and most likely giving-up lots of skin, the getaway car went blasting north, to disappear over a rise, into the night. Only the roar of the powerful engine subsiding into the darkness remained. The *McDonalds* paper bag was flapping goodbye, yet still managed to conceal the license-plate. For a minute or two, I just dumbly stood there, looking up the road, listening to the fading sounds of the car's engine, and thinking about what had just happened. God, or fate, or Karma work in such mysterious ways.

After I walked back to the store and climbed in my dented-up old dark green four cylinder *GMC* pickup, just before I could start the engine to leave, a police cruiser came roaring into the parking lot, skidding to a stop right behind my truck, preventing me from backing-up. The cop got out and hurried around my truck, and evidently didn't see me, since he was acutely focused on entering the store, weapon drawn. The customers were all gathered around the injured clerk, still on the floor behind the counter. The cop put his pistol back in its holster, and knelt down, to look at the clerk.

That's when it dawned on me, that I might be in

trouble, for having a concealed weapon, not to mention for discharging a firearm in the city limits! This delayed realization gave my malfunctioning brain its second shot of adrenaline. *Out of the frying pan and into the fire.* I then realized how stupid I'd been just standing in the vacant lot, thinking about what had happened. I could have easily been gone, before the police arrived.

Apparently, someone inside the convenience store had wasted no time in using the store phone, to call the cops, while I was dealing with Burt. Within five minutes, four cruisers and one unmarked car had arrived, discharging a total of seven cops. They all went in the store, to talk with the customers and look at the clerk. I'd put my gun in the glove box and scooted way down low in the driver's seat, so with a little neck stretching, I could occasionally peek over the dashboard, to check the goings-on in the store. When I had bought the old used truck, the windows were already darkly tinted, and I prayed that the police would think my truck was empty.

Unfortunate for the clerk, the ambulance arrived last. It seemed to take them forever to put the injured clerk onto a stretcher, load her up, and drive away to the hospital. The frail little black woman didn't seem

to be moving a muscle, as they carried her to the ambulance. At first, I thought she might have been dead, but then she moved her arms from her sides, and placed them over her heart.

The police continued questioning the customers. They took notes, then after about an hour, one by one the cops and the customers, began to leave. Oddly enough, no yellow and black crime scene tape had been strung-up. Miraculously, no one had seemed to notice me scrunched down low, behind my steering wheel. Another young female clerk arrived to run the store, so there'd be no lag in corporate profits. *Heaven forbid!*

Most likely, the cops assumed my truck was owned by the injured clerk. It was almost like I was invisible. At last, only one cop and one witness remained. *It looks like I'm nearly home free!* The older cop was questioning and consoling the last witness, a tiny animated skinny and extremely bow-legged, elderly black lady. She more or less shuffled instead of walked, in cheap well worn black flats. She wore a loose fitting black dress, which went well below her knees. The standout feature of her wardrobe, were her nylon stockings, which were plied-up around each of her ultra thin ankles. The cop and the woman

were talking on the concrete portico, just outside the store. As the cop turned to go to his car and leave, I just knew I was free! But, that's when the little white haired ebony matron decided to throw me to the wolves.

"Aren't you going to question him... that guy in de truck, right dare?" She said, pointing right at my face, scrunched down just behind the steering wheel.

Shit! She's pointing dead at me! I'm in trouble!

"He's the one, who shot at the thief." She added, pounding the last nail into my coffin lid.

Oh no! She would have to say, '...shot at!' Oh, no! I'm so screwed! The dear petite ancient African-American wrinkly fink had one small crooked boney finger, violently wiggling directly at me. I've never struck a woman in my life, but at that moment, I did so want to slap that little boney accusatory digit... slap it to the moon, as Jackie might have said.

As a rule, most black people don't enjoy talking to white police officers, but that tiny black woman couldn't seem to stop herself. *How could she do this to me? And, she looks so sweet!* No doubt in her day, anyone who'd shot at a robber would have been rewarded; still, I felt betrayed. *Of course, no good deed*

goes unpunished. The cop squinted and looked hard through my windshield, and his mouth formed an ‘O’ shape, as he spotted me in the truck’s dark interior, owlishly peering-out over the dashboard. *Christ!* I slowly pushed myself straight-up in the seat.

He was a gray-haired cop, and smiled as he used the middle knuckle of his index finger to tap twice on my driver’s side window, then he extended the same finger and made a rotating gesture. I complied by rolling down the window; all the while, I did my best to look innocent. Once the window was down, he continued to smile and nod his head. *I’m dead!* I tried to smile back, giving-up on my look of innocence. I’d placed both my hands on the steering wheel so he could see I wasn’t holding a gun. Three-seconds passed, before he put out his hand on the truck’s windowsill, palm-up. This caused me to recall the cop at the trap-house, with the raspberry stain on his shirt, asking for my driver’s license, with his upturned hand. Stalling, I just looked at him, and he spoke-up. *I should have unloaded it.*

“Let’s have it, buddy” He said, wiggling his fingers as a ‘give-me’ gesture, and he didn’t mean my license! *Who can I call to pay my bail?*

It was obvious that he meant my flea market .38

special, so I politely handed it over, handle first, with the cylinder open. These were things I'd learned long ago in *Boy Scouts*. The Boy Scouts used to teach so much more, than they do now. Not only did we learn how to safely handle and shoot guns, but we were taught how to reset joint dislocations, how to deal with fractures, even a compound fracture of the femur, using only a rope, two trees, and some sticks, how to treat strains and sprains, how to deal with shock, and arterial bleeds, etc. We even were taught how to treat snake bites. *Maybe he'll appreciate, that I'm handing him the gun in a safe manner.* Now the Boy Scouts are more concerned with liability.

"It's mostly loaded, sir." I confessed handing him the gun.

"No point to having a gun, if it's not." The cop responded. *He doesn't seem too mean.*

The policeman took the weapon, stared hard at the open cylinder, and of course, saw that one of the small silver primers was dented, indicating that a single bullet had been fired. He also smelled the gun to confirm the recentness of its use. *I'm going to jail!*

"Tell me what happened." He spoke. *I've got to make him love the story!*

A couple minutes later, I'd given him all the details. He laughed about the getaway scene, then asked about the tag number. I told him about the *McDonalds* bag, covering the car tag. He laughed, again. He posed a few more questions, and I did my best to field them. Then, he looked rather thoughtful. *Here it comes! Time to go to jail.*

"Well son, you did good, except I don't see how you forgot about your own gun in your jacket pocket. That is a real mystery. Guess you're not too accustomed to robberies, but all things considered you did pretty good, except you made one very serious mistake, right?"

"Yes sir."

"Well, what do you think your mistake was?"

"It's either having a concealed weapon, or discharging a firearm within the city limits. Right?"

"No! You don't shoot the car. Next time, if there is one, you shoot the criminal! And yes... it would be a good idea to get a concealed weapons permit."

"Yes, sir..." *Is he letting me go?*

"The clerk's really messed-up, where the jerk smashed her face and jaw. Now, start-up that rattle-

trap of a truck of yours and get out of here, before I change my mind, and lock you up. Let me get my car from behind you, first.” The cop informed me.

“Yes, sir! Thank you, sir.”

“Really... consider getting yourself a concealed weapon’s permit.” The cop advised.

He closed the gun’s cylinder, and returned it to me still loaded, and told me to have a good night. Needless to say, I was shocked to have the loaded gun returned. The rest of my evening was great, but I’m sure the fragile little clerk didn’t have a good night for quite some time. Most likely Burt, the robber, wasn’t having a good night, either, with the possibilities of a concussion, broken ribs, and a pair of skinned-up and fractured knee caps. But as I said, my evening turned-out to be a good one, since adrenaline makes for great sex, and I was dating a beautiful young black girl, whose name should have been Enthusiasm, instead of Jade, which matched her eyes.

After a few months, the little black clerk returned to her job, so one night when she wasn’t too busy, I dropped in on her. We talked about what happened the night of the robbery. Where many

people are hesitant to discuss personal issues, the clerk opened her mouth wide and showed me where her teeth were missing. For some reason, she wanted me to see the damage. Looking in her mouth, I tried to remain clinical and unfazed, but I certainly felt sorry for her. In addition, the scar on her cheek was elevated above and over her existing skin, in effect, it was a huge ugly keloid. Otherwise her ebony skin was smooth and flawless. Her showing me her injury reminded me of how a small child will show their parent, if they have a tiny cut on their finger, or a boo-boo on their knee. While dental implants did exist back then, as mentioned, they are too expensive. Dental implants are generally not for the poor or middle class.

I've heard tell that there was archeological evidence found in China, dating back over 4000 years where hand craved bamboo pegs, which were sharpened on one end, were used to replace teeth, being tapped down into the person's jaw bone, with a small hammer. The recipient probably smoked a bowl of opium, just before disagreeable the procedure. Likewise human remains in ancient Egypt have shown that teeth-shaped pieces of metal and ivory were also similarly implanted. In addition, the

remains of an ancient Mayan woman were discovered where seashells had been used to crave teeth, and were then tapped down into the jaw bone. The jaw bone had grown-up around the shell!

Apparently the facial pain the little black clerk had endured had been pretty severe. She kept mentioning the demerol she'd taken for the pain, so I began to wonder, if she hadn't acquired a bit of a drug habit. And when the doc no longer prescribes the pills, the street is the only place to get what you need to keep from going through withdrawals. Medical treatments often create a fair percentage of the world's narcotic addicts, which then keep the prison systems rolling in dough.

Before the robbery that night, I'd been in the store several times and had briefly chatted with the clerk. She had always been clean and neatly dressed, and slightly formal in her demeanor. Months after the robbery, she still wasn't the same. *She's not going to stay in this job much longer.* Two years later, she went to a low-income treatment facility for addiction,

MERCY



Coincidentally, a couple of years later, I'd again use the revolver at the same convenience store. With the second incident, I tried to persuade a massively large, powerfully built, black man to stop beating a small black woman. As I turned off *Howells Berry Road*, into the convenience store parking lot, there on the concrete storefront portico, were two extremely large and overly muscles black men, wildly shouting and gesticulating at each other. *Looks like a fight is about begin.* Safe inside my truck, the

radio was playing, so I didn't hear what they were yelling about. The two big guys stood squared-off on the same portico, from which the little elderly black woman had stood, when she pointed me out to the kind police officer, the night after the aforementioned robbery. The sun was going down, and the shadows were growing long, but the light was still good enough to see.

Parking in a space a mere ten feet away from the impending action, I had a ring-side seat. Gazing through my truck's windshield, I happily waited for the fight to commence. *This is going to be a battle of the Titans!* Admittedly, I enjoy watching a good fight. Street fights are generally not as damaging as those in the boxing ring or the MMA cage fights, unless of course, a weapon is involved or several guys beat-up on one guy. Professional fighters are extremely powerful, and well practiced in the art of inflicting serious harm. Not only are they typically more skillful and powerful, but they've trained so they have greater stamina, which usually means the fight lasts much longer. With street fights, the fighters normally don't have great aerobic fitness, and there are no breaks between the rounds, so the street fighters are more likely to run out of steam, sooner.

Judging from the muscularity and immense size of the two men, as well as their levels of hostility, it was promising to be an interesting fight! But when one of the men finally cut loose with a devastatingly fast straight right, the cannon-blast of a punch wasn't aimed at the other man, but rather at a small young black woman, standing right beside other ebony male colossus. *What the hell?*

The vicious black pile-driver of a fist smashed dead into her nose. *Jesus, her nose has to be shattered!* I could hear the meaty crunchy impact of the feral punch even inside my truck, even with the radio still playing. The small black woman's head instantly snapped back. *Wonder if her neck broke?* The guy, who threw the crushing punch, was an easy six foot six inches, with a weight somewhere in the neighborhood of two hundred and eighty pounds, and almost all of his mass was muscle and bone. Having absorbed the cannonball punch, the little woman flew backwards, striking the pavement hard on her back, just shy of going through the store's large plate-glass window. At first, I feared the brutal punch had been terminal. She laid motionless, corpse-like. My eyes searched for the rise and fall of her breasts, but at first I saw no movement. *Holy shit,*

did he kill her? He was a maniac, constructed with Biblical amounts of brawn, all of which were fully under the control of an angry tangle of neurons, running along at full tilt.

This time, I actually remembered the pistol in the glovebox, which the gray-haired cop had kindly returned to me, after Burt's robbery that night. Reaching across the truck's cab, I released the latch on the glovebox. The gun was under a bunch of papers, and let my fingers dig beneath them, feeling the familiar metal shape, I grasped and removed the weapon. Once I began exiting the truck, that's when the small black woman blessedly awoke, and sluggishly started to rise, but just as she sluggishly got to her wobbly feet, the same black muscular mugger leaped forward and delivered a second blow. This time it was a cruel ripping right upper-cut, with the same pile-driving effect. The hammer blow lifted the petite woman straight-up, off her feet, causing her body to literally flip over backwards. *That couldn't have done anything good for her dentistry.* During this event, I was climbing out of the truck, gun in hand.

That time, the unconscious small woman literally bounced off the store's plate glass window, which

miraculously didn't break, then her unconscious body dropped in a crumpled heap back down, with the right side of her face hitting the hard gray concrete. *What could this woman have done, to piss off this giant, this bad?* It seemed clear, he was out to beat her to death. Both punches had been thrown with merciless force. I cursed myself for not moving faster, after the first punch.

For a second time, the immense black man had knocked her comatose, and he continued moving in, squatting down, and drawing back his fist to finish her off, while she was still knocked-out, so I quick-stepped toward him. This was a man clearly above my weight class. *Maybe, she cheated on him, with this other man.* I stopped ten feet away from him, aimed the gun at his face, and shouted.

“Stop! Stop now or I shoot you!” *I've got no choice now!*

If this tactic failed, I was definitely going to kill him, since the man was going to kill the little woman, and the giant too much to deal with hand-to-hand. Besides, I'm only a so-so fighter. Judging from his size, build, and level of aggression, I felt sure that if I'd shot him, a judge would have ruled it self-defense, for indeed it would have been. Perhaps,

even the great Muhammad Ali at his best might have given this guy a wide birth, ergo I continued with my plea. Depending where it hit, one bullet might have barely slowed the troubled giant, so if things went wrong, I'd programmed myself to empty the entire gun into him.

“Sir! Please! I'm begging you to just stop! If you try to hit her again, or if you step toward her or toward me, I will kill you, and I definitely don't want to do that! It's just that you're way too big for me to fight. So please, please, please sir, just cool down! Take a deep breath, man. I am begging you from the bottom of my heart! I don't know what she did to you, but just let me take her to the hospital. You don't need a murder charge. The state of Alabama would like nothing better than to execute another black man. Please, I just can't allow you kill her, man. She's so small, and she's completely knocked-out. So Jesus, please don't make me shoot you! Just ease on back! Take a deep breath. I don't want to shoot anybody! If she wakes-up, please just let her get in my truck, so I can take her to the hospital. She's bleeding out her nose and mouth pretty bad, man. Whatever she did, maybe you've punished her enough, sir. Please, just relax. Cool your jets, man.”

At this point everyone there was looking at me. I was hoping he'd just walk away, but no such luck. A small pool of thick blood, and saliva, and maybe cerebrospinal fluid, had formed on the concrete, having issued forth from the corner of her mouth and nose. The monster turned and stared at me, blinking his bloodshot eyes, as if I were some kind of space alien. For a second, I thought he was about to speak, yet he never uttered a word. His silence worried me. It was like he was coming out of a trance. He was the kind of man, who is more prone to action, and less proficient with words. The giant's black skin was so extremely dark, almost a dark shade of gun metal blue. *God, does he look weird! Perhaps, he's insane.* A change in his expression, indicated that he was thinking about what I'd said. *At least, he's not looking at her, anymore!*

A couple of seconds passed and nothing happened, so I took this as a good sign. Quickly I thanked the giant, hoping to better solidify his restraint.

"Thank you, sir. Thank you for not hurting her, anymore. Listen man, I just want to get her to the hospital."

He barely nodded his acknowledgement. Still

watching the giant's face, unexpectedly a hurtful expression suddenly appeared. *Whatever caused him to attack her is still hurting him.* Maybe his look was meant to imply that he'd been so terribly wronged, that I should understand. I stared at him and tilted my head slightly to the side, and then squinted a tad to let him know I understood; when in fact, I wasn't at all sure. Yes, he was trying to kill her, but something told me that he was the good guy in the situation, and the woman was the devil. During that brief period of silence, a small hard dark green oak leaf fell through the air between us. We both looked at the small boat-shape, and with a tiny 'click,' it had landed on the concrete. In the brief stillness, we both looked at the leaf. That leaf diverted our attention away from the bloody situation, just long enough to keep his angry neurons from firing, ergo allowing me to escape having to pull the trigger.

Pointing the gun pointed skyward, I was hoping he'd remain calm. Nevertheless, if it was meant to be, I was fully prepared to shoot him, though I sensed his hostility was ebbing. A moment later, I was shocked to see that his eyes had filled with tears. The tears scared me, making me think he may have decided to take things to the limit... *Perhaps, this is about to be*

suicide by stranger. His chest then heaved two deep breaths in and out, through clinched white teeth, forcing his lips to be pushed forward. His monstrous fists were still clinched tight... lethal boney clubs, on the end of long steely muscular arms. The other black giant slowly backed twenty feet away, and just watched. *What's his role in this? How can anyone be a cop?* Maybe, it was the combination of my sincere begging, the elevating of the gun, and the small oak leaf, which had allowed the giant to cool down.

Suddenly, the unconscious woman awoke, raised up on one arm, sat up and leaned forward. She then leaned to one side and threw-up, but nothing came out. *Get-up, sweetie!* Blood was pouring from her nose and mouth. Thick drops rhythmically plopped onto the dirty concrete, and streaking down the front of her white button-up blouse, creating a few elongated deep red ovals. On shaky legs, she once again stood, then slightly staggered. *Don't pass-out! She's probably in shock. Maybe, she has brain trauma.* The giant's head once again swiveled in her direction. *Oh, no!* Wanting to head-off a third punch, I spoke to her.

“Just get in my old truck, right there, miss. I'll take you to the hospital. Everything going to be okay. It's the dark green truck, right there. Just get

in, please! We need to leave, now.” I said. *I hope this giant stays cool!*

Unaided and without a word, she teetered toward my truck, opened the passenger door, and climbed inside. *With all that blood, thank God, I’ve got a dirty old truck, I can just hose out, at the carwash.* Once she was in the truck and had closed her door, I retreated into the driver’s seat. Luckily, the colossal blue-black monster just stood there, tears still running down his face. He watched me back out and drive off. He had never spoken a word. On the way to the hospital, I asked the beaten lady nothing, and she volunteered nothing. Perhaps, her silence was due to dental damage, but perchance she was ashamed. Blood continued to flow from her nose and from one corner of her mouth, but it had noticeably slowed. *She’s got to be in pain.* Suddenly, she changed her mind about going to the emergency room, and mumbled that I should instead take her to her mother’s house, only six blocks away. Possibly, she didn’t want the issue to involve law-enforcement, since a beating, the likes of which she had sustained, was likely to require that the police arrest the giant, and certain delicate questions, and legal issues might be uncovered. Possibly, whatever it was that she’d

done to the giant was indeed criminal. I dropped her off at her mother's little home and never saw her again. There was a chance that the beating was a punishment well deserved. For all I knew, she'd killed someone, or injured the giant's child, or stole his life savings, etc.

In other countries, there are public punitive beatings. These still go on, in some countries of southeast Asia, Africa, India, etc. According to the indigenous peoples of those countries, those beatings are often times deserved and highly effective. According to the three black kings in Mexico City, public beatings were almost always effective at changing behavior. In the Tepito region of MC, nearly all the beatings were merrily carried-out by psychopathic Quinto. About one out of ever ten beatings was carried-out on a female. Quito never beat a woman with his fists. Instead, he'd have the woman stripped naked in front of everyone. She was held face first down on the ground, then Quinto beat her with a hard piece of bamboo, about the back of her legs, butt, and back.

The angry black giant had savagely beaten the little woman, exactly where the older diminutive black lady, with the piled-up ankle nylons, had

pointed me out to the cop, the night of the aforementioned robbery. Not that I'm superstitious, but I stopped going to that convenience store. You know what they say, 'Three's the charm.' Supposedly the saying applies to birth (the third child), games of chance (third roll of the dice), but also for death. Years later, I agreed to help a poor woman, who suffered with several physical ailments, to clean a laundromat: sweeping and mopping the floors, bleaching and scrubbing the disgusting restrooms, cleaning out the dust bends beneath the dryers, emptying the trash cans, etc. One evening, the third night on the job, the filth from the toilettes and the fumes from the bleach had made me feel sick, so I stepped outside for some fresh air, and a walk around the neighborhood to clear my head.

It was about 11:30 p.m., when I ambled behind a school to take a leak. It was also the third time, I'd used that location to pee, just behind the darkened elementary school, where there were a few large boxy wooden out-buildings, which served as temporary classrooms. Out from them, was a five acre playground, surrounded by a six foot chainlink fence. Standing in the dark, between two of the out-buildings. I'd just freed the lizard, when I heard the

rape. The young black girl was yelling, "I said no! Please stop! Stop! Stop it! No!" My urine flow stopped, and I returned the lizard inside and zipped-up. She yelled these commands over and over, and then she screamed for help, but her voice had become weak, fearful, and mixed with a small crying sound, after he slapped her across the face. The massive muscular rapist then spoke, "Shut the fuck-up, fo I knocks yo teethes out, Bitch! Yo gonna give it up! So, don't make me hurt ya... ya gonna love dis Alabama black snake, girl." About fifty yards from the crime, I was hidden in the darks shadows between two of the out-buildings. Squinting in the dark, I could make-out that she was prone on the grass, and the big black man was on his knees, and ripping off her clothes. Then, his pants were down about his thighs, and biologically speaking, it was plain that he was ready. She violently struggled, so he backhanded her across the face, causing her head to fly back. While one girl's rape, can be another girl's sexual fantasy, the vicious backhand let me know it was no fantasy. Most nights, when I helped with the laundromat, I carried the snub-nose, but not that night. *What to do?* Suddenly the solution just appeared, an unexpected brain fart. I stepped back behind the corner of an outbuilding, where I couldn't

be seen, and loudly yelled.

“This is Sergeant Ed Ricks with the *Mobile County Sheriff’s Department*... hold it right there, son! You’re going to jail, asshole! My men are surrounding the field, now!”

And, as it turned-out, that was all that was needed to stop the impending rape. The attempted rapist hurriedly pulled up his trousers, then he resembled Usain Bolt at the 2008 Olympics. I found myself marveling at his speed. In the dark, I could barely make-out his, vaulting the six foot playground fence, like it was hardly there, then sprinting away into the blackness. *How simple that was?* The girl couldn’t see me, but she was looking around for the cop, she’d just heard, but I elected to stay hidden. She then stood-up, began to pull her clothes together, and then she just ran away, in the opposite direction of her assailant. She yelled, ‘thank you,’ over her shoulder. Pleased with the outcome, I finished peeing, then ambled back, to finish the cleaning the laundromat.

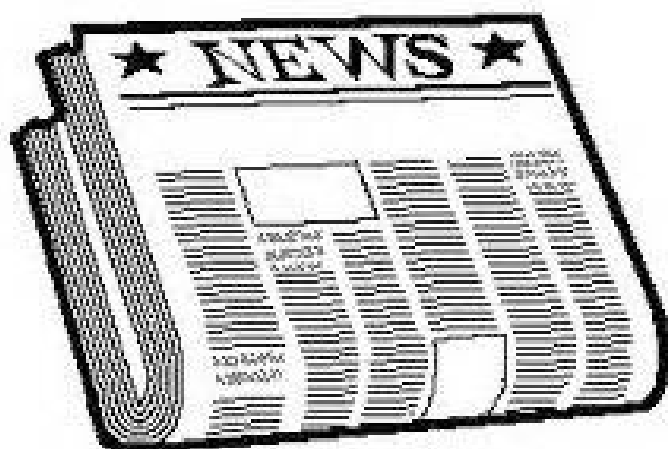
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-urnlaJpOAused>.

Cleaning the perpetually filthy laundromat was a tough grungy two to three hour job, which began, when the place closed. Closing time was always uncertain, because some people still needed to let their clothes finish drying. So, I'd often wouldn't get away until after one a.m. Besides cleaning the nightmarishly filthy restrooms, the worst part of the job was that it was in a high crime area. Rape of the cleaning woman, I was helping, and robbery of the coin-operated machines were ever present concerns. People were known to just walk into a laundromat with a hammer, and smash-open the coin boxes. Moreover, the cops rarely drove by, so after the attempted rape behind the nearby school, I took to regularly carrying the wheel gun.

One night, I left the laundromat to drive home, and was stopped ostensibly for running a stop sign, which I had not run. No doubt, the real reason the cop had stopped me was that I was coming from a high crime area, and the cops wrongly assumed that I was there buying drugs. Getting out of the car, I voluntarily notified the cop that I was carrying a loaded pistol, and was immediately arrested and thrown in the jail, then bailed out, an hour later. The

charge was 'concealed weapon.' The day of the robbery of the convenience store, cop gives me my gun back, and the next cop puts me in jail for having a gun in my pocket. Five thousand dollars to an attorney, who made one brief appearance to ask the judge for a decision of 'withholding of adjudication of guilt,' and I was free. It was my idea to ask for the withholding of adjudication. The judge agreed with the attorney's request and that was the end of it. Not bad pay for the attorney, who only made a five minute court appearance. I should have taken the cops advice, the night the little clerk was held-up, and gotten a concealed weapons permit. Much like marijuana, if the state can't make its dime off something, it remains illegal, and then they get money by arrest: bail, court costs, jail costs, legal fees, fines, attorney's salaries, police salaries, clerk salaries, etc.

[OBJ]



THE MOBILE VOICE

Every now and then, I'll get the urge for some good old-fashioned country cooking. That yearning usually strikes in the chilly days of winter, since low temperatures make me hugely hungry. No doubt that's the reason, American grocery stores and restaurants turn down their thermostats, so folks often end-up spending too much money on overeating. There's also a real chance that lowering-the-thermostat scenario has something to do with America's obesity epidemic, and of course the heavier the person the more energy gets burned for air-conditioning, making the coal and power companies happy, as well.

"Land of the free, home of the brave, and the fattest people on Earth."

David Letterman, June 2011.

Because of that thermostat-stratagem, I've usually wear a jacket to go out to eat, or to shop for food, even in the summer. A few restaurants in the

Mobile area have exemplary southern country cuisine, but my all time favorite eatery for southern fried country cuisine is *The B and K Cafe*, owned and operated by an older black couple from Edwardsville, Alabama; perhaps, it's the most racist town in the state. When at the *B and K*, I usually order greens, field peas, a giant piece of cornbread, and the best barbecued ribs in the South. The silent tall older white-haired jet black husband does all the cooking. The slightly grumpy ever scolding, but well intended, chubby little reddish brown wife manages the staff. Not a single white person has even worked there. Perchance that might be an example of a little reverse discrimination, on her part, since it's likely some whites have applied. Discrimination works in both directions, yet no amount of black discrimination against whites, begins to compare to what the white race has inflicted on blacks. Nevertheless, many whites in the South are still quick to point out those blacks, who tend to distance themselves from whites, or seem angry with whites, or appear to be in the slightest bit unfriendly. And the term, 'uppity n__r,' is frequently used, down here.

As you might expect, most of the restaurant's

patrons are black, but there are scarcely any whites. Such non-bigoted white folks are usually transplants from the north, proverbial yankees. Non-racially prejudice whites are the distinct minority in Mobile. Some of the local white *FBI* agents eat lunch at *B and K*, since most of them have been transferred from northern or west coast states, where racism isn't as rampant. The food is always well prepared and mouthwatering, as are a couple of its aesthetically pleasing black waitresses. All that beauty probably brings-in most of the male customers, and that is likely the reason the wife does so much firing. As they are for many things, women are more than a match for men, but especially when it comes to jealousy. When I was a kid and a young adult, it seemed that I encountered more men being jealous of other men; now, in my older years, it's rather obvious that the women express the most jealousy.

The cafe has no particular cultural decor. The walls are covered with a drab flower patterned oatmeal colored wallpaper, decorated with only a few black and white photographs in cheap thin black wooden frames. The photos are of various people and sites in the Mobile of the 1930s, through the 1950s. The whites tend to look at these photos as nice

historical memories of what Mobile used to look like; whereas, the same black and whites are illustrative of struggle. The furniture appeared to have been dragged out of a 1950s roadside diner. Nevertheless, the place is clean, the food delicious, and the service prompt and provocative. It will never grace the pages of *Gourmet Magazine*, but when it comes to black southern cooking, it is extraordinary.

That chilly day in the restaurant, I was about to meet an atypical older black gentleman. The place was packed, yet I had a small four-chair table all to myself, and was the only white person in the restaurant. Since I was slightly early for lunch, as yet, none of the local guys from the *FBI* had arrived. Looking-out through the front plate-glass window, while waiting to place my order, I watched as a shiny new dark blue *Lincoln Continental* pulled-up, and parked along the curb.

The tall gangly black man with uncommonly long thick grayish-white hair, combed straight back, climbed out of the car. He had an extremely large head and something of an intelligent horse face, and even with his mouth closed, his lower lip markedly protruded, accentuated by the fact that he kept his chin elevated. The wrinkles weren't just the usual

horizontal lines, but formed rather meaty rolls, spanning his brow. His swept-back iron gray and white hair reminded me of a lion's mane, and his gaze was that of an old judge, who'd seen far too much.

For a moment, he stood next to his car, looked up at the slate-gray winter sky, and seemed to glower. *He looks like he's pissed with the world.* Though tall, he was not physically intimidating, yet he still projected an air of ascendancy. *That guy is definitely one of a kind.* Unlike many people, his regale appearance was legitimate, not the usual put-on to cover-up for ignorance. So often, insecure people try to look austere and aloof, when in truth, they're just reckless little children, who don't have the brains to realize how silly they appear. Similarly, there are those people, who seem to enjoy making other people wait, when they slowly cross the street in front of your car, as if that makes them feel more important. These pitiful moronic irritating imbeciles somehow feel that they are forcing people give them respect. This is by no means related to the woman, who wants to make you wait, before retiring to her place. Nor is it nearly as exciting. This type of false respect is born of insecurity, not from things like

genuine hard work, honesty, integrity, courage, etc.

The stranger, who'd just gotten out of the *Lincoln*, was the polar opposite of such sham folks. Later, I'd come to realize that the black man was somewhat fearless, especially when it came to the local cops and politicians. Though he was not well educated, after knowing the gentleman for a few years, I can say that he was a confident, highly intelligent, self-made man, and a true pleasure to have known.

That cold afternoon, he was decked-out in an expensive well tailored dark blue suit, with thin gray pinstripes, topped-off by a heavy black cashmere overcoat. Flicking a half-smoked cigarette at the curb, he headed for the entrance; his habit of eating had overcome his nicotine habit. For a moment, he just stood inside the entrance of the cafe, head held high, surveying the packed restaurant, with his large slightly protruding eyes searching the dining area for a vacant table. But as mentioned, there were none. He was definitely different, a bit weird, but it's those people, who never set one foot outside the box, that are to be pitied. He looked too proud to ask me to share, so pointing at the empty chair on the opposite side of my table, I courteously spoke-up.

“Please have a seat, Sir. I don’t need these other three chairs. Take the one across the table.”

The word ‘Sir’ is perfect, at times, since it connotes respect, quiets misgivings, and indicates that the user is at least somewhat courteous, ergo the word puts the onus of civility on the recipient. That was one of the many things, which my long departed Grandpa taught me; that when first meeting someone, lead-out with respect. That one minor lesson has stead me well, and allowed me to enjoy people, who otherwise I might not have. If you wait for someone to earn your respect, they may not bother, so why not led with it. On the other hand, there are those people, who from the outset, you can easily tell are living nightmares, undeserving of respect, and best steered clear of. There was only the slightest hesitation, as he briefly meant my gaze. *He doesn’t want to share a table with a white guy, but he’s hungry.* He didn’t talk, just nodded, sat down, cleared his throat, leaned forward, propped his elbows up on the table, raised his two large hands, and began rubbing his palms together, with his tobacco-stained fingers and thumbs pointing straight-up. Never before had I seen such deep tobacco stains on someone’s hands. Even though his skin was a natural

yellowish brown, the smoking stains were impossible to miss. *He's gotta be a chainsmoker.* The aged regal gentleman began to smoothly lace and unlace his fingers, over and over, while stopping just long enough to loudly rubbing his dry palms together. In all the years that I'd know him, I'd see him repeat that simple gesture *ad nauseam*. It was always done as if he was thinking, trying to figure something-out, except he also did it when he was hungry. He looked everywhere but at me.

This African American doesn't like white people. In the years that followed, I came to realize that that assumption was accurate. He then raised his left hand to call the comely waitress. He cupped his huge palm and briefly rotated it, similar to how the English royal family might wave, from their motorcade. The rotating cupped palm quickly caught the waitress's attention, and five-seconds later, she stepped-up to our table, pad and pencil in hand. With his head raised, but his eyes gazing down at the table top, he whispered his order. When finished, he pushed his lips in and out a few times, as if that somehow signaled the task of ordering was complete, and that she, the waitress, could leave, then he began to rub his palms together, and lace and unlace his

stained fingers, again.

The young black waitress simply nodded, and departed to the kitchen. Upon closer scrutiny, I noticed there was a distinctive fine scattering of tiny dark moles on his medium brown face. The mini moles were more evident on his pronounced cheeks. He probably had some American Indian roaming his ancestral halls. Undeniably, he was a regular at the restaurant, who I'd never before seen. Most of the other patrons, took note of him, and kept glancing at him, yet no one so much as waved or nodded to him. *Maybe this guy is a black gangster.* Gazing around the room, he said nothing to me, but the lack of conversation didn't seem awkward, just different. He just wasn't into conversation, and sure as hell wasn't into meaningless chit-chat.

I'd been in the restaurant for at least five minutes, before him, waiting to order, yet when the waitress came to my table, she had only taken his order. Moreover, the black family of four at the table next to me had been waiting, even longer myself, yet the waitress had also overlooked them, in favor of the newly arrived older gentleman with the lion hair and tobacco stained fingers. The aforementioned owner-wife, who managed the staff, looked especially

miffed that the young attractive waitress had waited on the man ahead of others. Regardless of all the looks he received, the well dressed guy didn't pay anyone any mind. His thoughts seemed elsewhere.

With a groan, he cast-off his expensive overcoat onto the two rear posts of his chair, scooted his butt backwards, leaned forward, placed his weight back onto his elbows on the edge of table. That maneuver allowed him to slightly bow his back, and that's when he relaxed, stopped gazing around, looked at me, and after considerable delay, he spoke.

“Thank you.” *Wow! That ‘thank you’ sure didn’t come easily.*

I don't like to say, ‘you're welcome,’ and I didn't, since I really hadn't done anything. I just nodded. The gentleman clearly appeared to be a confident successful man. I'd never meant anyone quite like him. To break the silence, I posed the age-old over-worked question.

“What do you do?”

“I own and run a newspaper.” He responded with no pride, no elaboration, and without hardly looking at me.

The old guy seemed irritated that I asked. I knew

about the people that owned and ran the *Mobile News Register*, so I wasn't quite certain what the stranger meant. *It must be in another town, if he's telling the truth.*

"A newspaper?" I asked.

"Yeah." He frowned hard, while emitting a small groan of exasperation.

The frown and the groan were intended to say, "Yeah, you dumb ass?" Then again, I imagined that he showed the tiny amount of disgust, because he thought that I had figured that a black man was unlikely to own a newspaper in redneck Mobile, Alabama. If he made that assumption, I'm sorry to say, he was indeed correct. After all, we were living neck deep in rednecks. Mobile was the home of the aforementioned racial serial killer, Joseph Paul Franklin, and many others with a similar mindset. Later during that delicious meal, I would learn that the black man across the table was Jess Munfree. All I had to do, to get his name, was to introduce myself, and extend my hand, across the table. At first, he wasn't too big about shaking hands, nor was he interested in my conversation, and this, I sensed, was likely owing to some amount of racial prejudice, against whites.

But so what if he was a bit biased? How would your average white guy feel, if for a couple hundred years the black race had enslaved and/or oppressed his white ancestors, worked them in the blistering hot fields picking cotton, bred whites, as if they were cattle, punished and/or killed them, if they weren't obedient enough, and then, for years there after, demeaned the whites in oh so many ways, separate schools, water fountains, not allowing whites in restaurants, separate bathrooms, markedly inferior whites only medical clinics, no right to vote, etc.

Jess was all too aware of how blacks were mistreated by whites, ergo he was filled with misgivings, but it was not a true fear or hatred of whites, but more like a deep skepticism with just a modicum of hate stirred-in. I respected and partially understood his feelings, since in the Deep South, a successful, overtly racially biased black man, with that much attitude, was a rarity. He wasn't about to make an effort to talk with an unknown white guy. Nonetheless, we later became working friends, but never what you'd call good friends. We never socialized, except for the occasional lunch, but we were both comfortable with that, and preferred it that way. Friendship can come in many forms.

Until that moment, I had never given much thought to the fact that there was a black newspaper in racially segregated Mobile. Even so, I suddenly recalled seeing those rather thin lightweight newspapers in most of the local convenience stores. They were also on newsstands, as well as in coin-operated, spring-loaded, paper boxes, outside various stores, and shopping centers. For some reason, I'd never picked one up. *Why haven't I ever bothered to read the black newspaper?* The *Mobile Voice* came out once a week and was generally only ten to fifteen pages in length, primarily catering to Mobile's minorities: blacks, latinos, and Vietnamese.

Later that day, I'd pick-up a copy and thumbed through it, perused the various articles, and notice that it contained a fair amount of advertising, which I realized could be extremely profitable for the newspaper owner, who'd been sitting across the table from me. In those days, the newspaper went for 25 cents an issue. It's now up to 50 cents. The cut of Jess's clothes, the watch on his wrist, and the car he'd just had gotten out of, all indicated that Jess made some serious coin, and my bet is that the *IRS* never knew about most of it. Deals paid for in cash... advertizing done for 'charitable' organizations...

articles written for churches, advertising their various events that were often paid for under the table.

“What’s the name of your paper?” I inquired.

“*The Mobile Voice*.” He answered.

“You own and run *The Mobile Voice*?” I asked.

“Like I said, owner and operator.” He impatiently responded.

“How’d you get into that?” I asked, not to be deterred by his slightly irritating racial bias, but being from Mobile, I was accustomed to racial prejudice, but mostly white against black.

He clearly didn’t want to talk with me, so I couldn’t resist pestering him with polite, well intended, questions. I asked that question, knowing that I was invading his privacy, but I was also interested. He spoke-up fast and the words came-out rapidly and smoothly, but at a very low volume, almost a whisper, as if he were trying to keep from coughing. Too frequently, he had to stop talking and take a few breaths during his discourse, as if he’d just been running. He’d also often clear his throat. *Wonder if he has COPD?* Smoking is a very tough addiction to quit.

“When I was a young man, I studied photography in the Navy, and had a knack for business. I’d saved-up most of my Navy paychecks. When I got out of the service, I needed a job, but there weren’t any worth doing in this city, especially not for a black man, so I bought a used camera, and a functional typewriter, and started the paper... my part of the American dream. It was really fairly simple. I’d take the photos I’d made, and articles that I’d written, to a nearby printing company. I’d write about things going on in the country, state, or in Mobile. The printing company would print-up the weekly newspaper bundles. I’d take the bundles around to various stores and convince them to let me sell my papers to their customers. Once the paper got going, I started selling advertising. Now, I’ve got two young people, who write for me, a guy who make the deliveries to the stores, news-stands, and paper boxes, and another guy that sells my advertising... just the five of us. One of my writers is my granddaughter. Now, I’ve got a small building, in a low-income area, and a couple of good computers, so I just email the articles and photos to the printer.” Jess summed-up years of accomplishment in seconds.

He was a man of few words, the opposite of what

I'd imagined a newspaper owner to be. It was most likely that same succinct verbal tendency, together with his draconian skepticism, which had kept him off the klan's radar. On the other hand, for all I knew, he may well have had a confrontation or two. Perhaps, he'd worked-out some kind of agreement with them, for nothing about the klan ever appeared in the paper.

"I'm sorry to say, that I've never read your newspaper. But, I do recall seeing it in the stores."

The comment was made as a confession, yet his frown made me feel like he took it as an insult. He then shrugged twice. It was as if he was saying, '*Of course you haven't read it, you're white.*' He desperately wanted me to leave him alone, but I wanted to talk. It was a boring day, and that guy was truly unique enigma, so I pressed on with the conversation.

"Next time I see one in a store, I'll buy it."

"Many whites don't know about my paper. A few do, but it's mostly businessmen, and a handful of local politicians. White businesses account for a lot of my advertising, especially the car dealers. They pay the most." He looked away and smirked, as he said

this.

God, he really hates talking with me! Still, the more he appeared to dislike the conversation, the friendlier I became, and the more I pushed. Periodically, there was a slight whine to his voice, culminated by the occasional cough, or clearing of his throat. The whine and the cough, were efforts to bring-up phlegm. The chronic clearing of his throat, the smell of his clothes, and the stains on his fingers, all screamed that he was a serious smoker. As it turned out, he was a true chain smoker. Through the years, often times, I've found Jess with more than one cigarette lit. Sadly, emphysema would claim him about ten years, after I meant him. Truly, I miss the old man... always full of insightful information. He genuinely loved a good laugh, or a piece of juicy political gossip.

If you must 'believe' (whatever believe means) in God to get to heaven, Jess might not have made it. He just couldn't seem to tolerate any form of religion, nor did he seem too big on the idea of there being a God. Jess seemed to believe that the idea of God was just a way of controlling people, a way of milking the masses of their money. But I wasn't around in the months just before his death, and

sometimes when death comes a-knock'n, people undergo a dramatic change of perspective, about there being a God. Christians tend to love the idea that a non-believer becomes a believer, right near the end. Perhaps, because it seems to confirm their own belief, or maybe their ego likes to think they've won the age old argument, or least frequently, the Christian may actually enjoy the idea that the new believer gets to heaven. On the other hand, if hard work, integrity, and sticking to one's own ideals, can get you through the pearly gates, then Jess is probably running *Heaven's Holy Voice*. There'll be a staff of saints working as his writers, angels doing the deliveries, while Satan sells the advertising.

Jess's outspoken anti-religious stance caused many black preachers to avoid him; but, that was something I enjoyed about Jess. He was surrounded by a community of staunch black Southern Baptist believers, yet he didn't succumb to the fear of hell, or to the allure of heaven, and he didn't care who knew about his opinion of organized religion. He trusted in himself to discern the truth. What if that is God's true test to get into heaven... your ability to remain honest, regardless of what some supposed holy set of scrolls or texts say, regardless of societal or religious

pressures, and in spite of your own fears or desires.

This above all: to thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.
Farewell, my blessing season this in thee!

Hamlet Act 1, scene 3 by William
Shakespeare

In an empirical way, truth is being true to one's self. Is it not? So quite possibly, you only get into heaven, if you are good and true to yourself! So, to believe because of 'faith' is one's ability to lie to one's self. If you don't believe in God, but you're honest, and you've fairly and seriously considered the available evidence, you can be admitted into paradise, regardless of what some scrolls said. This is of course provided there actually is a paradise. After all, then you're a true believer... a truth believer... loyal to truth as you see it, which in effect, is the only truth any of us ever really know or are capable of knowing; anything else is fake. Nothing in the Bible is actually written by God or by Jesus. The books of the Bible are written by men, many of the books are of unknown authors, and the books of the Bible were hand selected by men, from hundreds of

available scrolls. In particular, The Roman emperor Constantine helped to choose the scrolls, compiling the Bible from many little scrolls, which were then floating around the Eastern Mediterranean (325 AD). None of the original scrolls used to collate the Bible now exist.

Yes, I know that the Bible says that a person must ‘believe,’ but how else would the admittance test be valid? And just consider how the Bible was made. True belief must be based on the individual's perception of truth, not on what some text says, regardless of how wise it may seem. A lie about belief could work a least a couple of ways. One is where a person says they believe, but they don't and only claim to believe, just to get into paradise, or to avoid burning forever. The other is the person, who says they don't believe, but they do, but what they believe is in goodness. That's what my brilliant Grandpa, with the photographic memory, had claimed... that God was simply goodness, not all the other mumbo-jumbo.

“Joey, God is the simplest thing there is. God is just pure goodness, nothing more” Grandpa would often say.

If that is true, then one's goodness may be the

only true measure of belief. Imagine that if there is a paradise and the admittance is simply a measure of the individuals goodness. During the lunch, Jess finally warmed-up and obliged me with a little conversation, filling me in on some aspects of the good ole boy network, which ran Mobile. He became more friendly, once he'd eaten a bit. *Maybe, he was hypoglycemic.* His knowledge of local politics and business was nothing short of phenomenal, and he presented a unique perspective on most things local, things which I'd never considered. Because he ran a paper, he had gained a great deal of respect among the local blacks and the white power brokers. Jess knew plenty of people from every walk of life: lawyers, state attorneys, cops, business men, drug addicts, preachers, hookers, civil rights leaders, writers, jailers, second story guys, teachers, homeless, killers, etc. Jess only discriminated against, racists and preachers, and he hated the latter the most. Oddly enough, black Jess was completely against welfare. He claimed that before 1954, *per capita* more black men and more black women worked, than white men and white women. He felt that the massive government handouts had destroyed much of the black race. Welfare had made too many undeserving people lazy and untrustworthy.

I'd venture to say, he may well have been the most widely feared black man in Mobile, by more than a few white politicians, certain black politicians, some rather notorious drug dealers, and a few black religious leaders. Jess had dirt on lots of folks. As most of us might expect, the black politicians often catered more to the white powers, rather than to their own black constituents. The drug dealers were generally only threats to the other dealers, or to the people, who owed them money. Moreover, all the dealers were afraid of the cops, unless they were in the upper echelons of the drug game, then the Sheriff was their ally.

But nobody, be they white, black, civilian, businessman, minister, politician, or cop, wanted to see their misdeeds laid-out in glorious newsprint, to be distributed all around southern Alabama, northwest Florida, and southern Mississippi. In that respect, Jess was sort of like a taller, non-gay, black, J. Edgar Hoover. Fortunately, and unlike J. Edgar, he wasn't into blackmail; at least, not that I knew of. Still, I wouldn't have put it past him, since he always remained somewhat enigmatic, especially about his money, and Lord knows he virtually worshipped the stuff.

His little weekly newspaper had a circulation of just over 235,000. Most of the readers were black, but over the next few years that I worked for Jess, I became aware of many professional whites who religiously read the paper. This wasn't only because of politics, but because blacks purchased goods from white owned stores, whence it paid to be familiar with the black perspective. The non-white population of Mobile was growing at a much faster rate, than the whites, and more and more blacks and hispanics were registering to vote, as well as taking interest in politics. The 'majority-minority' tipping point is estimated to be somewhere around 2044... when whites will no longer be the majority. It boggles the mind to imagine what various politicians may orchestrate to slow the inevitable. Whatever they do, you can bet it won't be good for blacks. Most likely, the number of prisons and their populations are going to continue to skyrocket, and the actions of the police will become more stringent. On the other hand, the old saying, about whatever you survive making you stronger, might be largely true.

Roughly sixteen percent of the country is African-American, yet they make-up forty-five percent of those in the jails, and thirty-seven percent

of those in the prisons. If I share these stats with local bigots, they just take those numbers as proof that blacks are inferior, lazy, and criminal. Through the years, the percentage of blacks in prison has steadily climbed (below). Between welfare and prisons, blacks now have little hope. There are bonafide recipients of welfare, people who desperately need it; but, for the vast majority of those on welfare, they are pitiful failures. Not just because they've been motivationally castrated, by the government's free assistance, but because the low paying jobs are generally not sufficient for them to want to climb-out of the welfare trap. Furthermore, the average educational level and IQ of those on welfare is likely to be lower than the national average, hence it becomes even harder for them to climb-out of the snare. The government needs to instrument effective methods to incentivize work and education, both for those on welfare, as well as for those in prison.

<https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/125618.pdf>

Just maybe, today's welfare and the prison systems also have something to do with things like: a

marked decline in the quality of the educational system, the skyrocketing cost of higher education, the fact that more and more large monopolistic corporations now control the subtleties of employment, and that, regardless of political propaganda, available decent jobs, which people can comfortably survive on, are way down in number. Moreover, there are owing to things like: automation, over population, corporations choosing cheap overseas subslave (labor which pays very little and the workers have no benefits) labor, and the fact that the minimum wage doesn't begin to keep-up with the ever-rising cost of living. There is not just the loss of incentive to work, due to welfare state, but the ever present problem of profitable drugs. Lots of young people would rather make \$1000 a day selling cocaine, meth, or opiates, than work a minimum wage job, where they have to work in cramped quarters, dealing with a demanding boss, and putting-up with rude customers, without making enough to live on their own.

The drug problem in America can be eradicated if we treat verified addiction like a medical condition, and the dealers are immediately out of business. Again, 98 percent of addictive drugs are

used by addicts, so lets just given them their drug in a controlled setting. Furthermore, too many black kids are being raised without the proper discipline and values, because too many welfare parents are looking to blame the system for their failures, and while there is some truth in their claim, it is far from valid. Because of the parent's loss of respect for law and order, many of their children have become lawless and problems in school, and as a result, the schools have deteriorated. School administrators have become terrified of frivolous lawsuits. Too many children now receive no discipline at home, or encouraged to be lawless, and so too many schools are out of control.

“He that spareth his rod hateth his son; but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes...”

Proverbs 13:24

Rarely, did a white businessman or politician come into the newspaper's office. They'd usually just phone. Possibly, they didn't want to be seen in the low-income area, for indeed, the newspaper office was located in the most crime ridden neighborhood of Mobile; nevertheless, the newspaper building was

never burglarized. In the evenings, four blocks to the North, drugs and sex were sold on the corners, and sidewalks. The newspaper building looked like it should have been bulldozed. In truth, the building, and its lot, were literally not worth the expense of renting the demolition crew. Possibly, the property was part of Jess's camouflage, for the *IRS*.

In those days, I wrote editorials for Jess, taught classes in anatomy and physiology to nursing students, at the nearby Mobile College, and fully enjoying both jobs. I did those two jobs, while working the occasional criminal case for the *Sheriff's Department*. Each of those three things carried its own type of fulfillment. Perhaps the three foremost benefits of an occupation are the sanity which work imparts, the ability to do some amount of good, and of course to earn a living. The investigations and the writing gave me something to do, on nights when I couldn't sleep. But for Jess, I believe money was his only genuine reward. As mentioned, if you grow-up poor, you'll almost always worship money; perhaps to the point, that you're willing to sacrifice your relationships. Perchance, Judas had been brought-up poor. Those thirty pieces silver was about the equivalent of around \$11,000, today.

As mentioned, Jess detested organized religion (except for the religion of money) and possessed a never ending plethora of derogatory descriptives, which he enthusiastically employed when describing the local black churches, ministers, and pastors. As best I could determine, he absolutely hated religious leaders, but particularly the black ministers, except for the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. Still, Jess disagreed with most, if not all, of King's religious opinions, and felt that King was far too passive. Jess firmly supported the civil rights movement.

He would probably have preferred wrestling alligators in the northern Mobile swamps at midnight, during a hurricane, than to share an evening meal with your average black minister. Jess hated black ministers, more than he hated white KKK bigots. Once while discussing a certain black minister, with a very large Mobile congregation, Jess said something about it being easier to respect your adversary, than it is to respect a traitor to your own race. He believed that black ministers were simply exploiters of their flocks, 'thieves with a cross in one hand, and a bible in the other.' The congregations got to feel better about their life, because the minister gave them hope that heaven was in the

offing; all the while, the black minister got the congregation's money and their misplaced respect. To Jess, church was nothing more than a money grab.

According to Jess, Mobile's black preachers, would persuade their elderly parishioners to rewrite their wills and leave their houses and other properties to the church, which meant the preacher got rich. Jess said that the miserable ministers would falsely promise to look after the elderly person's children, in exchange for the promised inheritance (money or property). Oddly, enough Jess had gotten a seminary license, before he attended the military's photography school. Like I said, he worshipped money. In those days, you only had to pay a fee to be licensed as a pastor or minister. No schooling was needed. In essence, anyone could be a preacher, by simply filling-out a form, and paying ten bucks.

Most of the black Baptist ministers drove beautiful cars, wore expensive well tailored clothes, sported lavish jewelry, lived in big homes, and had sex with more women than there were shingles on their church roof. Jess felt that many black ministers were atheists, disguised as believers, and Jess was always pointing-out things, which confirmed his

derogatory opinion of black ministers. The Roman Catholic church may have more money than any other organization on earth, yet the majority of its followers live in abject poverty. According to one famous University, the average weekly donation of an American Catholic to the church is \$10. There are 85 million Catholics in North America, therefore each week, the Catholic Church pulls in \$850M from individual Catholics. If there still are fifty-two weeks in a year, that means the American Catholic Church, from donations alone, brings in roughly \$44 billion, annually. This doesn't include the more profitable things, such as: property left to the church in wills, nor does it include the money gleamed from the church's near countless investments in American property and business. I've frequently wondered how much of America's wealth gets shipped to the Vatican. Jess used to estimate it at being an even trillion dollars each decade. It's hard to imagine how that effects the US economy.

In social perspective and cutting sarcasm, but minus the comedy, Jess appeared not too dissimilar from Bill Maher. He was one of the very rare southern blacks, who was openly anti-religion, as well as anti-God, and didn't care who knew it. Jess

took pride in his social-philosophical posture. He felt all religions are nothing less than grand lies, robbing people of their humanity, giving them false hope, turning them into mindless sheep, while siphoning off their money, and starting too many wars, or exacerbating existing wars. Even so, be it right or wrong, you probably shouldn't mess with someone's belief, their particular shot at eternity, and means of avoiding the big nothingness, but Jess sure messed with it.

While Jess felt religions were hole-and-corner, concerning the coveting of wealth, he himself stayed heavily focused on the dime. In other words, he was unduly slow to pay me, and believe you me, he didn't pay much, yet he never cheated me. Jess paid me for each editorial, or story, I completed. Still, I often had to track him down, to receive my pay, which was always cash. He counted-out the bills, like he was being murdered. Like I said, Jess's god was money.

If a minister wanted a church function to be advertised, or covered and written-up by Jess's paper, they'd do their best to avoid speaking directly with Jess. Instead, they'd try to talk to one of the paper's writers. Ministers loved to have their church functions appear in the paper since it meant a larger

turnout, an increase in future regular church attendance, which translated into more contributions. Since *The Mobile Voice* was the only regular black publication of redneck Mobile, the ministers were forced to deal with Jess. If a minister was greeted by Jess, it was usually meant with a frosty silence, where Jess simply frowned and waited for the minister to say something first, or if Jess were in a good mood, he might coldly say, "What do you want?" Never did I hear Jess ask a minister, "How may I help you?" Ninety percent of the ministers, who came to the paper, were black Southern Baptists, yet Jess detested them all. Most of the time, Jess was right about them, but there were a couple, who didn't just talk the talk, but they seemed to righteously walked the walk. Something told me, that Jess and the ministers might have periodically worked-out an under-the-table agreement, since even though Jess detested religion, there were habitually church-related articles in the paper.

Armed with my laminated press card, I interviewed lots of prominent local figures and was amazed by the respect afforded by the small plastic card. The power that a reporter wields can be nothing short of amazing, but in my case it was so

undeserved. Those I interviewed would often transform themselves, when they thought, that what they were about to say, might be read by hundreds of thousands! Butt-heads would behave like saints. Talkative people suddenly became carefully reserved, other times it would be visa versa. The trick, to interviewing a prominent person, was planning, and knowing when to deviate from that plan. For example, I interviewed one of Mobile's newly elected Sheriffs, a vowed racist, rumored to have been a member of the *American Nazi Party*. I'd made the appointment for the interview, with the Sheriff's secretary, simply telling her I worked for 'the newspaper,' without specifying that it was the black paper, and just letting her assume it was the large white-owned *Mobile News Register*.

Arriving at the office, I was warmly greeted by the Sheriff, and I thanked him for granting me the interview. All of my questions were designed to butter him up... to put him at ease. The first set of questions basically asked him to review all of his past accomplishments and awards, which had ultimately allowed him to be elected. Next, I asked about his successful campaign. Then, I went into a series of questions which dealt with his various plans for the

future of the *Sheriff's Department*. How he loved to pontificate about what he was going to do to improve the *Sheriff's Department*, and I did my best to appear impressed. *He loves this interview!*

At the end of the meeting, the sheriff loved me so much, he wanted to give me his first born. Smiling, I stood-up, and shook hands with him. Thanking him for an 'informative' interview, and I then headed for the door. Opening the door, I stepped halfway out, but then I leaned back inside his office.

"Sheriff, would you mind, if I ask you just one more question?"

"Not at all Joey, anything you want." He happily smiled his response.

"Would you mind telling me why you've fired, or demoted, every black officer and very female officer in the *Sheriff's Department*, since you've been elected?" I dropped this bombshell, with a totally neutral facial expression. *This is gonna be great!*

The sheriff was clearly startled, yet said nothing. The look of surprise transitioned to something beyond hateful, as he realized I'd set him-up. At last, I was looking at the face of the true racist. So, as I headed out the door, I told him that when I'd write-

up the interview, that I simply say that he hadn't made a reply, but had instead elected to give me an ugly look. I'm sure that the editor of the *Mobile News Register*, received a puzzling angry phone call, one minute, after I'd left the building. Thinking about that likely event, while driving back to *The Mobile Voice*, I could hardly stop laughing. My fear of the Sheriff was attenuated by three facts. One, that I'd parked blocks from the *Sheriff's Department*, so my license plate wasn't observable. The second fact was that my press card possessed a phony name. I had Jess to thank for that. The last fact was that I hadn't shaved for two weeks, before the meeting, and had worn fake, thick black rimmed glasses.

In all those years that I worked for the paper, I never meant Jess's wife and don't even know if she's still alive, but I got to know his wonderful daughter and granddaughter. These highly intelligent women, were beautiful in looks, as well as in spirit. Besides her intelligence, the granddaughter is also something of an artistic soul. At different times, both women worked for the newspaper. The daughter took it over, after Jess's death, and still runs it, now.

OBH



THE HABITUAL OFFENDER

Perhaps the most gratifying scrawl, I ever put into newspaper print, was a series of editorials

dealing with the racially biased application of an Alabama law, known as the '*Habitual Offender Statute*.' Properly used, that law can be a genuine service to the state and its law-abiding citizens, by keeping seriously dangerous unredeemable felons away from the general populace. But the statute has also frequently been misapplied, producing tragic consequences for far too many black citizens, within the fine state of Alabama... never mind the hours in the fields, the rope burns, scars, and keloids.

<https://www.history.com/news/whipped-peter-slavery-photo-scourged-back-real-story-civil-war>

The scribblings were a string of articles started, because of some bulk data, which Jess had gotten released from the *Alabama State Bureau of Statistics*, in Montgomery, Alabama. The capital city is located right along side the beautiful Alabama River, which my cousin and I'd frequently canoed down in the summer. There's little doubt that the good ole boys, working in the Alabama capital were unaware of the contents of that data, when they released it. Jess brought the depressing data to my attention; yet oddly, he didn't suggest that I write about it. He just

told me to take a glance at it. The data begged me to translate the numbers into words for public scrutiny. Jess left it up to me, whether or not to write the articles. The statistics made it obvious that the above-mentioned statute was being applied, unfairly against a disproportionately high number of black felons. The legal abuse of that statute was a major crime itself.

Basically, that law said that if an individual were convicted of three felonies, or had been found guilty of just two felonies, but one of the two felonies was a violent felony, then he or she could receive thirty years to life in prison! The *Habitual Offender Statue* was used to put a lot of black people in prison for thirty to life. Convicts often refer to being sentenced under the *Habitual Offender Statue*, as receiving “the bitch,” and it’s a bitch with a deadly set of fangs. Just try to imagine thirty years to life, in a prison where life can be a constant desperate struggle, surrounded by inmates, many of which are well known for hostility, and supervised by guards, often with a streak of sadism, guiding their actions. Each day you eat cheap unhealthy food, and if you get sick or injured you receive limited medical care. You constantly live with absolutely no privacy, even

using the toilet in front of others. You sleep on a small uncomfortable bed, and during the day, you're forced to put-up with near constant amounts of noise, generated by frustrated, often mentally disturbed, inmates.

The numbers plainly indicated that in the sublimely judicious State of Alabama, if the convicted felon were black, he or she was five times more likely to be sentenced under the '*Habitual Offender Statue*,' than if they were white. The statue allows a judge to give the convicted felon the weighty sentence of thirty years to life! Apparently, it didn't pay to be black, when being sentenced in an Alabama courtroom by an Alabama judge. According to the aforementioned statistics, if two people appeared in an Alabama courtroom, and let's say for examples' sake, that both had been found guilty of exactly the same three felonies, but one defendant was white and the other was black, the odds were that the black defendant was five times more likely to have the *Habitual Offender Statute* judicially applied against him or her... five times more likely to spend thirty years to life, behind bars, than the white defendant. It may be hard to believe, that a just and non-racially biased state, like good ole Alabama,

could do such an unjust thing, but that's exactly what the state statistics indicated.

As unfair as that is, it was totally legal! It is legalized racism, since no law was actually violated. The average citizen may not be aware of what routinely passes for justice. Often, I've wondered what would happen, if the racially biased application of the *Habitual Offender Statute* were somehow brought to the attention of the US Supreme Court. Might there be some form of compensation for all those, who have been wronged? But then, how could one begin to measure the amount of damage inflicted by such a heavy racial bias? Perhaps, a class action suit might still be possible.

In most cases, where the *Habitual Offender Statute* is applied to the guilty defendant, the statute is first suggested to the judge by the *States Attorney's Office*, by the prosecutor, before sentencing. It's then up to the magistrate to decide whether to sentence the guilty defendant, under the brutal statute. In some cases, black men had received life imprisonment for the following three felonies: driving with a suspended license, defrauding an innkeeper, and employee theft. Any combination of those felonies could result in life imprisonment. For example, there

were men in their twenties, who'd been caught three times, for while driving with a suspended license, and ended-up dying in prison. There were many white felons, who had been found guilty of committing five to ten felonies, but were serving less than five years! With this pointed application of the *Habitual Offender Statute* many young petty criminals, who were simply trying to escape poverty, or just acting foolishly, were receiving prison sentences, as if they were dangerous killers. Imagine being a desperately poor twenty two year old guy, who got caught driving with a suspended license a couple of times, when you were a teen, then one day, you get caught for stealing from the register of the fast food business, where you work, ergo the judge locks you away for the rest of life.

For the necessary material to compose the related series of editorials, I interviewed various: judges, states attorneys, public defenders, as well as some of the black felons, who had been sentenced under the *Habitual Offender Statute*. Oddly enough almost none of the black men, who received the bitch, had the money to pay for an attorney. The saying was, 'to beat the bitch, you got to be rich.' Unlike what Hollywood might have you believe,

most of the black felons, serving thirty years to life, under ‘the bitch,’ were readily able to admit their guilt; nevertheless, when it came to receiving ‘the bitch,’ they generally felt discriminated against.

The racial exploitation of that legal statute was nothing short of earth shaking, a semi-covert form of modern day slavery, perchance even worse than slavery; for in many respects, prison is worse than slavery! And yet, no one was talking about this insult to black humanity. Short of those racially biased executions, which aren’t too infrequent in the big AL, the racially biased application of ‘the bitch’ is probably the most heinous legal device, I’ve ever heard about. If you want to put the kibosh the black vote, while keeping their population down, what better way than thirty years to life? No one gets to the ballot box. and no sperm fertilizes any eggs.

As a result of writing that series of editorials, I (my pen name on my phone press card) received a letter, at the paper, from the head *State’s Attorney* for the thirteenth judicial circuit of Alabama. I’m sure the *State’s Attorney* was hoping that it might somehow find its way into a publication at *The Mobile Voice*... anything to placate the black folks of Mobile. The State Attorney actually thanked me for

the less-than-complimentary articles, and for bringing the ‘unfortunate egregious misapplication of the statute’ to his attention, as if he didn’t already know about it. He said he was taking steps to rectify the racially biased situation. So, foolishly I wrote an article, claiming that he was in the process of making sure that the *Habitual Offender Statute* was going to be evenly applied, across the races, within his district. Did that really happen in Mobile, you ask? What do you think?

No doubt, he had vehemently hated my acrimonious articles. To cover his ass, he possibly he did make some minimal changes, but we all know about bureaucrats, and the likelihood of them actually being truthful and following through on their promises. They only make good on promises, which ultimately give them what they want: money and/or power. That series of articles on the *Habitual Offender Statute* made runner-up in a state-wide editorial competition. Unbeknownst to me, Jess had submitted my writings to the state editorial contest. The first place winner was some editorials about Alabama’s tourist industry, penned by a far more gifted writer than I. If you’ve read this far into these books, you know I’m not much of a writer, and that’s

not false humility.

The principal perpetrators abusing the *Habitual Offender Statute*, were most of the State's Attorneys and the majority of the judges. The system of judges seemed to be: Alabama's Supreme Court, its' Court of Civil Appeals, and the Court of Criminal Appeals. Furthermore, there are trial courts: circuit, probate, municipal, and district courts. Besides the racial bias in the application of the bitch, certain judges had a history of turning down appeals made by black inmates, and doling-out lengthy (but legal) sentences to first time black felons. The number of blacks in prison were three times those of whites, when blacks represented about sixteen percent of the population. This means that per capita, there were about nineteen times the number of black inmates! The intervening variables influencing that statistic are found both inside and outside the legal system, and there are far more than I've listed below, but these seem to stand-out the most in my aged mind:

1. cops (over policing of black areas, more prone to arrest blacks, more prone to shoot blacks, more likely to issue multiple charges against blacks)
1. State Attorneys (more rigorous prosecution of blacks, recommendations for higher bails for

blacks, apt to charge blacks with more grievous felonies, recommend max sentences for blacks, recommend the *Habitual Offender Statute* for blacks)

1. judges (issuing more max sentences for blacks, more apt to issue the *Habitual Offender Statute*)
1. racially biased jail personnel (This can result in additional charge while incarcerated)
1. racially biased prison personnel (This can result in additional charges while incarcerated)
1. racially biased public defenders (less effort to defend blacks, encouraging blacks to accept unfair sentences)
1. welfare and food stamps, destroying people's motivation to get ahead
1. life in poverty
1. a lack of available self supporting jobs
1. TV shows and movies which operate only in the extreme, where black people are unfairly judged and persecuted, without also revealing the other side of the coin.
1. Black leaders, who vehemently address how whites persecute blacks, while largely ignoring or

glossing-over how blacks fail themselves and other blacks. Such leaders teach black people to look for excuses, rather than inspiring them to succeed.

1. Black parents, who didn't put in the time to properly raise their black child, serving as a good role model, demonstrating: honesty, hard work, ethics, and fair play.

The Alabama judges were obviously well connected men, right up through the judicial hierarchy. Almost all of them belonged to a particular 'conservative' political party; just try to guess which party, that might be.

Yes, back then, there were a couple of black judges, but of course they hadn't unfairly employed 'the bitch' on those, who'd been found guilty. In fact, they had rarely used the statute, in sentencing, regardless of the race of the defendant.

How hard was it for a racially prejudice white judge to simply impose the maximum sentence, simply because the convicted felon was black? Nothing to it... Such abuse of judicial power went, and still goes, completely unnoticed by the media; after all, the abused person is a convicted felon, so who cares? Right? Again, although less than ethical,

such sentencing was, and is, completely legal, and is quite common, and most likely exists throughout most of the southern states. If judges abuse the *Habitual Offender Statute*, as the state's own data indicates, it only stands to reason that they also abuse the sentencing range. By abusing the *Habitual Offender Statute* and the sentencing range, the amount of damage perpetrated upon black society is immeasurable. Just try to imagine what it does to a family. To the best of my knowledge, no one oversees the judges to make sure that such racial biases are not being imposed on the minorities. There is a judicial inquiry group, but in the South, it too is usually staffed with good-ole boys... former judges. Quite likely, these biased exploits also occur in Georgia, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, Oklahoma, and maybe other states. That series of editorials on the racially skewed application of 'the bitch' in Alabama gained me a slight amount of unwelcome notoriety. Bare-in-mind, that my picture was not included with the editorials in the newspaper, yet a few times, I'd be stopped in a store, where some male stranger, always white, would merely say something unfriendly.

“Aren't you the guy, who's been writing that shit

about the *Habitual Offender Statute*?”

Sometimes I confirmed their question, “That’s me.”

Other times, I pretended ignorance, “What are you talking about, buddy?”

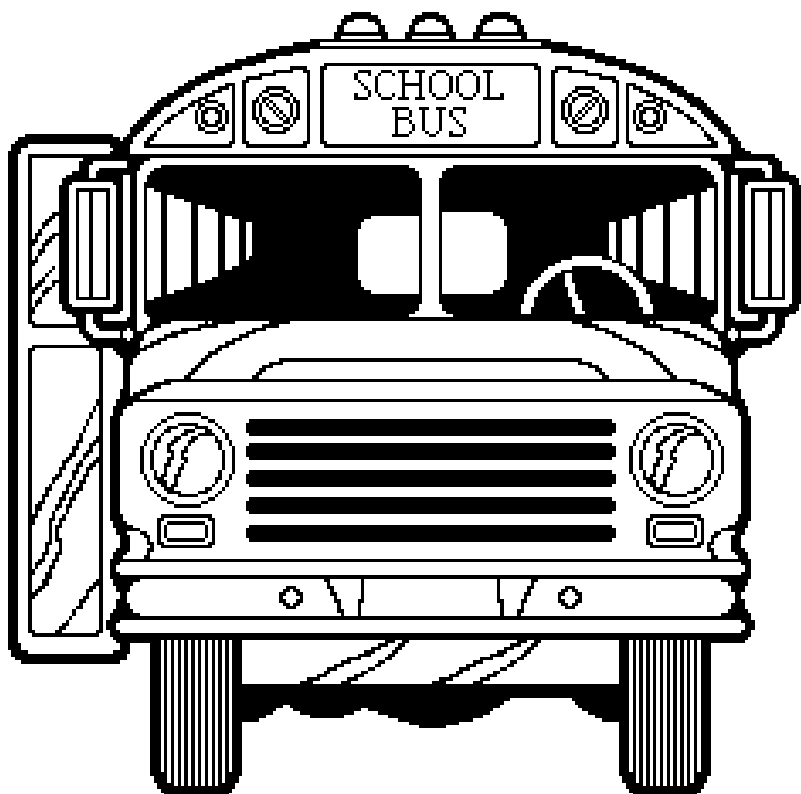
Which of the two above responses I used, often depended on my visual assessment. If the guy looked truly dangerous, I went for the latter. Nevertheless, nothing ever happened. Most likely, these few unusual encounters were meant to be intimidating. How those people knew I was the author of those editorials, is a bit odd, since as mentioned, my photo never appeared in the paper, and I wrote under a pen name, and I hadn’t mentioned my writing to people at *Mobile College*. On the other hand, all someone would have to have had to do was to stake-out the newspaper office, and follow me home. A cop could have simply run the plates on my car, which was often parked at the newspaper office. In addition, I did interview a lot of legal people: the Sheriff, judges, public defenders, State Attorneys, cops, etc., and there were plenty of cameras where I conducted those interviews.

When I’d asked how they knew who I was, they’d

usually just walk away, and say something weird like, “Hope you know what you’re doing, asshole...,” or “It’s your ass, buddy...,” or “You’d better be careful, man.” Those indirect threats had me frequently checking my rearview mirror, and looking at reflections in store windows, and on shiny surfaces, for a few months, afterwards.

Had I been a man of courage, I might have investigated further, and written more articles. Perchance the requisite data is still available, but after that series of articles were written, it might have been ‘adjusted.’

OBJ:



THE SCHOOL BUS FROM HELL

The most bizarre story, I covered for *The Mobile Voice*, involved five people: an unfortunate young black girl, her angry and fairly strong willed mother, a cruel white redneck female school bus driver, an

obstinate male *KKK* member, who was in charge of the school transportation department, and the elected, mendacious, white superintendent of the Mobile County public school system. It was an oppressively cold winter's morning, when the black mother charged into the newspaper offices, with her young daughter in tow. Jess was always stingy with the heat and the air-conditioning for the building, so that cold day, everyone came dressed in layers of clothes. The matriarch was around forty, a fairly large woman made with a little extra robust muscle, hung on a squarish skeletal frame. Judging from her intransigent expression, the woman was struggling to suppress a near terminal case of rage. More than anything, the woman desperately needed to vent. Consequently, Jess realized that the interview was not going to be a pleasant one, and so he benevolently pawned-off the irate mother onto me. Suddenly, my office door flung open, and in came Jess, the pissed-off mother and the shy little girl.

“Joey, this lovely lady thinks we should write a story about what happened to her daughter, here. I knew you'd want to hear what she has to say. Ma'am, Joey here will take good care of you.” Having introduced us, Jess covertly winked, smiled, then

humorously rolled his eyes, as he left the vexed mother, and her young daughter, in my small office. *Jess is such a considerate man. Not!*

No doubt, he'd left to go to have one of his long (near never ending) smoke breaks. He couldn't handle not smoking for more than five minutes. So sometimes, I wondered if he didn't inhaled more burned tobacco smoke, than actual air.

"Gee, thanks so much, Jess!" I sarcastically responded to his departing back.

"Hello ma'am, I'm Joey Bone. You guys please have a seat on the small couch. Tell me what happened, and we'll see if it warrants writing a story. Talk slowly and calmly, so I can better understand, and I'll need to take a few notes. Every now and then, I may have to stop you to ask for clarification. Try to stick to just the facts. Try to leave-out your emotion." I said to the vexed mother.

"This ugly white redneck woman bus driver made my child..." She began with both fists forcefully pressed down into her lap, struggling to maintain her composure, but just barely succeeding.

Her daughter was barely fourteen, small for her age, and extremely timid. The sweet little girl

deferred to her mother to lay-out the details of the story. After the mother described the events, the child politely answered my questions. *This kid is the polar opposite of her mother for expressing aggression.* The girl seemed to possess a genuine innocence, leaning into her mother's side, as she gently replied... "Yes Sir, or no Sir," to my questions. When her mother or I spoke, the girl sucked on her lower lip, as if it was a pacifier. *She's still got some of the baby in her.*

Perhaps in the modern world, parts of a child's brain 'need' to mature more quickly; whereas, others it may be best to develop more slowly. Neurobiological development is forever bumping heads with social evolution, and too often culture doesn't pay homage to what is normal biological development. The future always grows from the present, which grew-out of the past. It's all predetermined, with just the ever convincing allusion of freewill, created by gray tissue which is the mostly isolated (poorly connected with other subconscious areas of the brain) ego. Likewise our understanding of time is largely the brain's chronological storage of events/memories, much as I'm relating the fictitious events of these stories.

The mother was more than ready to have her child's story publicly aired on the pages of *The Mobile Voice*. She wanted nothing less than to have the hateful white female school bus driver, hung-out to dry, on the pages of the black paper... drowned in a flood of black newspaper ink. According to the matriarch, the offending party was an older white, somewhat pudgy, red-faced female school bus driver, with scraggly blondish gray hair. The bus driver had humiliated her child, jeopardized the kid's life, caused the fourteen year old to become sick with a debilitating case of bronchitis. That illness caused the girl to miss quite a few school days, resulting in her falling behind in her studies. Not to mention, that the poverty stricken mother had lost several days of work, and really couldn't afford associated doctor visits and drugs.

The day before the incident, the mother had taken the child to a lady's hair saloon, and paid for the girl's very first hairdo. The little trip was a pivotal moment for mother and daughter, a minor benchmark in the child's growing-up process, and the child had been thrilled with her new look. She couldn't wait to show-off her new hairstyle to her school friends. The trip to the beauty shop was an

expense, which the poor mother could ill afford, yet she'd managed to save-up her few winnings from a couple lucky nights at a smoke filled bingo hall.

If you're not too afraid of old ladies and tons of cigarette smoke, venture forth into any dingy bingo hall in the Mobile area, and just take a gander at who is there. While bingo is one of the favorite pastimes of old folks, it also appears to be popular leisure game with recovering female drug addicts. After all, gambling is an addiction, and obviously addicts have addictive personalities. Win or lose the gambler gets their dose of adrenaline. Also, if the addict plays several bingo cards at once, they don't have time to worry, or be concerned about their drug cravings. Perhaps, bingo should become a type of drug treatment modality. On the other hand, more than a few people have lost their paycheck playing bingo. Some claim the game grew-out of an Italian lottery, called, *Il Giuoco del Lotto d'Italia*, which first began around 1530.

At one point during the mother's story, the small child handed me a one foot squarish piece of clear saran wrap. When I looked at her for an explanation, the child turned toward her mother, indicating she wanted her mother to explain the meaning of the

piece of saran wrap. The story began the morning after the hairdo. During a tenacious rain storm, the young girl was standing under her tin roofed carport, waiting for the yellow school bus to arrive. When it stopped in front of the sheltered carport and the opposing double doors opened, the young girl ran about twenty feet through the thunderous downpour. She carried her books under her left arm, but with her right hand, she had carefully covered her new pricey hairdo, with the piece of clear plastic saran wrap, which she'd handed me. The girl wanted her hair to continue to look nice, to show it off to her fellow classmates, as something of a declaration of her emerging femininity. The child then contributed to the mother telling the story by saying, 'It (the hairdo) looked real nice.'

As one of the girl's well worn wet tennis shoes landed on the wet threshold made smooth black rubber-coated metal, her shoe lost traction. The foot slipped forward, and so the child started to fall backward, but rather than dropping her books, she reflectively grabbed for the bus door with her right hand. Her quick grab was good, ergo the fall was averted, and she made it safe, dry, and smiling into the shelter of the school bus. However, in order to

grasp the door, the tiny piece of clear plastic saran wrap had been released, and was swiftly snatched-up by a gust of wind, causing it to sail up into the air, and across the hood of the bus, then out into the highway, filled with the traffic. The motorist were stopped in the downpour, probably impatiently waiting for the flashing school bus to depart. The drivers of the cars were no doubt partially blinded by the sheer magnitude of the torrential deluge. It would not have been unreasonable to assume, that in such a blinding rain storm, a hurried driver could have easily have missed seeing the bus's flashing lights, and carelessly shot past the stopped bus.

Here begins a story of marked cultural disparity, as well as unjust hatred; quite possibly, it's a story of contrasting neurologies. The parts of the gray matter, which represent things like: goodness, kindness, caring, love, etc., and the parts of the brain, which represent things like: hate, intolerance, sadism, racism, and anger. Such pieces of gray mush are hard-wired in certain people. This is not to say that life's experiences don't play a role, for indeed they do, but not all people are born with equal amounts of nerve cells in those various groups of gray matter. Descriptive words like: love, hate, caring, anger, etc.,

are nothing more than mankind's fumbling efforts to contrive words to explain extremely complicated pieces of brain tissue, large numbers of nerve cells, firing in different intricate patterns, whose activity vary from person to person. One person's idea of love or hate may be vastly different from another's, respective and irrespective of life's experiences. Some people love to love, where others love to hate; some enjoy various amounts of both.

Behavioral psychologists may hate to admit it, but there are countless people, who are inherently altruistic and kind, as well as others, who are destined to be selfish and depraved, and both types have been somewhat predetermined, prior to sliding down the birth canal. Again, while experience and environmental factors are both important, they're not always as influential as some people might like to imagine. Attributing behavior to environmental issues supposedly gives hope, but at times, it's a desperate false hope, and there may be consequences for such grasping at straws. It skews the truth.

The small piece of worthless clear saran wrap ended-up being snagged on a tuft of grass along the edge of the opposite side of the street. The bus driver saw the flapping piece of saran wrap, and that's

probably when the hateful woman's pea-sized brain realized that a golden nugget of opportunity had just presented itself; it was a blessed situation designed especially for her enjoyment. It would allow the racist a means to vent her hostility, upon the sweet innocent black girl, and thereby release a virtual tide-wave of pent-up neurotransmitter, from her overabundant hate-generating neurons, contained within her poor excuse for a human brain. This circumstance may have even stimulated her *Septal Nucleus*, generating a corresponding bit of sexual arousal. Bless the innocent readers, who believe such behavior is unlikely.

In my subsequent investigation of the mother's allegations, I did get to briefly meet the vile woman bus driver. Regrettably, she was indeed unattractive in face and figure, yet by far, her personality was her ugliest attribute. Angrily, she refused to speak with me, giving me a look of profound disdain, which instantly revealed, not only her utter complete lack of remorse, but her true nature. So certain she was in the righteousness of her racial hatred, that she glared at me, as if I were the world's most ignorant meddling fool. Her beady blue eyes quickly scanned back and forth across my face, her nostrils flared,

and her mouth making an 'O' shape, it was as if she were saying, "I can't believe that you're backing a n__r child! Your a traitor to our race!"

"Are you kidding me? Ha..." She blurted-out, as she abruptly turned and walked away.

"No, I'm not kidding! I just wanted to ask you some questions about how you treated a certain black child, but your look has pretty much told me everything I need to know about you. What kind of person picks on defenseless kids?" I said to her departing back.

Seeing, that the saran wrap had snagged on the clump of grass, barely passed the highway's far edge, the bus driver turned back to face the little black girl, who was still just inside the open door. The school bus driver extended her right hand to prevent the child from going down the aisle to take her seat. With as much anger as the harpy bus driver could muster, and louder than the downpour hammering on the metal roof of the bus, she bellowed-out her demand, upon the unsuspecting little girl.

"I won't be tolerating no stupid child littering on my bus! You hear me? No littering... You hear what I say, girl? Now, get on out there and pick-up that

piece of damn litter, you done dropped! No littering when you ride on my bus! Get out there right now, if you want to continue to ride on my bus! Go get it, now! You hear me? Go on, now! Hear? Go get that trash! It's right there just on the other side ah da street." She screamed at the forlorn child, while the rain continued to hammer on the bus roof, as if it were parked beneath Niagara Falls, during spring thaw.

Later, when interviewing the other children, who'd ridden the bus that day, I found-out that the driver, in her vicious tirade was no longer white, but a radiant beet-red. The kids also informed me that the furious driver's eyes were bugging out of her microcephalic skull, while spittle was flying from her offensive mouth, and her pudgy left index finger was pointing emphatically toward the small piece of clear plastic, snagged in the grass, just on opposite side of the four lanes. During my interviews, I'd asked each child to pretend they were the female bus driver, and using their best acting skills to imitate the bus driver. Amazingly, a couple of the kids turned into impressive actors, which made me think that perhaps our elementary schools should consider including one or two acting classes, in their curriculum. Such

skills would have many uses in life, not just for actors, but for lawyers, salespeople, politicians, teachers, etc. There are more advantages to studying acting, than just being able to effectively emulate a character. For one thing, the experience can be a tremendous confidence-builder. Of course, to include such classes in the schools, might take funds away from the massive defense budget and the ever-hungry military industrial complex, so we'd better forget that idea. What do our children matter, compared to booms and missiles? Yes, weapons protect our freedom, but we spend twice as much money on defense, as do China and Russia combined! We are 1st in our ability to deploy death and destruction, 1st in prisons and the number of citizens incarcerated, but at best, we are 15th in education, and 37th in the quality of medical care. It's time to wake-up, America.

When interviewing the kids, I'd first obtained parental permission, and always ask that one or both parents be present, during the interview. It never failed to impress me that regardless of the child's race, each kid was thrilled that someone had taken an interest in doing something about the evil bus driver, whom they were all forced to endure, twice

each school day. With the parents' permission, I recorded the interviews to be able to prove, that I conducted the interview in an impartial and proper manner. Moreover, it was odd that not one of the parents was aware to the evil bus driver, even though every kid clearly despised her. Not one kid had mentioned the driver to their parents, so each interview seemed to surprise the parents.

While children can be remarkably adaptive, they should have every possible consideration to maximize their learning experience. However, each morning, and each afternoon, when they boarded the bus, there would sit the hate-filled prejudice female gargoyle to greet each child. What a way for a kid to start and end the school day! When beginning a new task, circuits must be activated, and others must be inhibited. Circuits affiliated with strong negative emotions are generally more difficult to inhibit and slower to disappear, so how you begin the day can have a marked effect on the day's outcome. As a result, there's no measuring the adverse prolonged effects that such a bus driver may have had on the kids. A similar situation exists for the use of coffee, and the circuits which are stimulated by caffeine.

Say that a person needs to study for a test, but is

too sleepy. They shouldn't begin to drink that cup of coffee, until they are already studying. Then, the brain circuits which will be stimulated by the caffeine will be those that are used to study. The caffeine tends to best enhance the neurons, which are already active. Ergo, if a person is cleaning the house, while beginning to drink their cup of coffee, they may find it to be next to impossible to transition to studying, and they will likely just continue to clean the house, rather than study.

Each child, both black and white, patently enjoyed venting about the 'crazy horrible' bus driver. I was impressed at how the children, inherently felt the injustice of racism, regardless of their color; that was something my maternal grandmother wouldn't have agreed with. Interviewing the kids gave me hope... a generation born to bring goodness to the earth.

"You can tell the way she looks at the black kids, she hates them." One white student declared.

Standing just inside the bus, for a moment the small black girl hesitated to obey the angry school bus driver. Running out into such a downpour for a little piece of saran-wrap was beyond ridiculous. However, the girl's hesitation triggered yet another

angry outburst from the maniacal redneck, causing another crimson flush, and a second loud barrage of harsh spit-laden words.

“If you wanta be able to continue to ride on my bus, and don’t wanta have to have your black mama drive’n you to school, from now on, then you’d better get your butt out there, and pick-up that litter, you done threw out there! Now you go get it, girl! You hear me? Get it, now, girl! Right now, girl! Hurry up. Ya hear?”

According to the school children, at least the bus driver did not use the ‘N’ word. Probably the only thing which stopped her was the fact she could have lost her job. Almost violently, the driver pressed for the retrieval of the wet piece of saran wrap, probably because she knew that the traffic might soon start honking, forcing her to abandon her loathsome demand, thereby losing her one chance at exerting power over the innocent black child with the pretty new hairdo. The driver didn’t want to miss-out on experiencing the corresponding sadistic satisfaction, not deprive herself of that pleasurable flood of neurotransmitter in the medial frontal gyrus, right putamen, the right and medial insula, the right fronto-medial gyrus, and the premotor cortex

(bilaterally). Those hateful portions of the bus driver's brain were probably abnormally large. Some people are wounded by hatred, where others are the essence of evil, and love to do the wounding. The driver's evil demand would result in a cascade of burdensome ramifications.

Reluctantly, the poor girl placed her books down on the dirty wet bus aisle, then dashed out into the freezing blinding rainstorm. Slipping and sliding, while lightning split the sky, the small girl successfully traversed the four lanes of stopped traffic. In complete dismay, she successfully retrieved the worthless piece of saran wrap. Fortunately, she did so without getting hit by a car. Drenched to the bone, she hurriedly returned to the bus, picked-up her books, put the saran wrap in her notebook, and finally took a seat. Since the temperatures had been dropping that morning, the child was frozen, the bus wasn't heated. It's worth mentioning that the child was also humiliated, having experienced the destruction her new hairdo. To make matters worse, the bus driver, frequently smiled at the girl in the rearview mirror. When the child told me about that particular fact, it was the only time she displayed a slight bit of anger.

“That lady smiled at me, but she doesn’t like me. She smiled cuz she was glad she got me all wet, and ruined my hair. She’s hateful.”

There will probably always be those who love to hate, because in the mammalian world, oft the meaner the animal, the better the breeder, ergo the more likely its’ DNA is to survive. Prior to civilization, almost certainly such a correlation existed, and still does. Racism was probably something learned by the bus driver in her formative years, but the magnitude of her hatred was probably something more inherent. In years to come, as racism becomes less acceptable, the haters will be forced to join groups of like minded folks, where they can still feel some degree of power and acceptance... peers with whom they can share each other’s hatred. Something about the presidential candidate, Donald Trump, implies to me that he may be a racist, and if elected, certain things in America might change drastically, like the relationship of the races. For example, law enforcement may be given more latitude (more dead black men) in dealing with the minorities. Hate groups could also surge. Trump will probably make half-hearted efforts to defend those hate groups, but only half-heated since most voting

Americas dislike bigotry. Trump will probably give tax breaks to the rich, and allocate the distribution of the national budget, so that more money goes to huge companies, making-up the military industrial complex. He'll claim that by doing such, the economy will benefit, which is partially true, but only for the rich and a small percentage of the upper middle class, who are employed by those businesses. Correspondingly, it will destroy important social programs. He'll do his best to end planned parenthood, and low cost healthcare.

By the same token, Hillary Clinton, who depends on the minority vote, if elected, will help minorities only enough to get and keep their vote. Welfare, as it is currently exists, cripples far more people than it helps, by destroying their incentive to work, and this creation of system dependent lazy parents breaks down the family unit. The parents begin to feel that their signing-up for the checks is actually some kind of accomplishment, in and of itself. And while the parents often feel entitled to the money, they resist the system which issues that money. Welfare needs to not only provide money, but to make certain demands. Money should be provided in accordance with the individual's progress: successful pursuance

of jobs, and/or completion of certain educational classes. Where there is no good reason why a person can't work and/or study, they shouldn't be rewarded with government money.

When will America realize that these polar opposite political parties are destroying the nation... nothing quite like having two extremes running the country. Can't we do better? Is this really the best system we can create? When America began, the population was about 3.5 million, and 3.9 million. Now, we have about 100 times that many people. The country started with two parties, and still only has only two parties. Conceivably, it's time for a little more variety.

The kids on the bus, which I'd interviewed had been racially split; roughly half were white and half black. There were no Asians, no Latinos, just blacks and whites. During the interview, I asked many questions about the behavior of the young black girl.

"What was she like? Was she well behaved, or a problem child? Had she ever misbehaved? Had she ever had a run-in with the bus driver in the past?"

With the parent's permission, I also asked questions about the bus driver, and how she got

along with the white students. When asking those questions I did my best to remain unbiased.

“Do you feel the bus driver feels differently about black children and white children? How so? Does she seem to hate the white children? Does she seem to hate black children? Does she often become angry? Is she someone you’d trust? Do you think she’d make a good parent? Is she someone, you think your mom or dad would want to have as a friend? Would you say that the bus driver is more of a good person, or more a bad person?” Kids love simple straightforward, somewhat politically inappropriate questions, and so do I.

All the children confirmed that the driver was basically a living nightmare. Both the white and the black students, referred to the bus driver by using terms such as: mean, angry, racist, redneck, mad, stupid, crazy, etc. They all saw right through her. The kids had also confirmed that the little black girl was a model student, and basically a kind, though overly reserved, child; who up until that morning, had succeeded in eluding the wrath of the hateful redneck bus driver. Perhaps that accounted for the driver’s intense enmity, since she (the driver) had been unable to find an excuse to inflict punishment

on the child. After that small piece of clear saran wrap had fortuitously been whipped-up, by the cold wind, and blown out into the thunderous downpour, to be snagged in the grass on the opposite side of the highway, there it was, the bus driver's bloody golden opportunity, to vent her wrath! While sadists enjoy inflicting misery, they truly relish it, when the victim is innocent and pure. For the true sadist, the more angelic the victim, the sweeter their reward. Sound like anybody you know? Is there any politician, who would dare to harm children? One, who might have you believe that it's for the good of the country, and some good people will believe them. There is such a leader discussed in the next book. That sick psychopath is someone I found-out about from working with a world renown forensic psychologist, who was kind enough to serve on my doctoral committee. He's spent his life studying murderers, and looking for correlations with neurophysiology, and genetics. That same psychopath was also treated by friend of mine, a psychiatrist, who helped to prefect the *MMPI*, the *Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory*.

Once the cold and soaking wet child was in the school, she began to shiver violently, and continued

to do so for the next four hours, sitting on a hard wooden classroom seat, in her sopping wet clothes. Just before lunch time, the school phoned her mother, who had to leave her job, and lose most of a day's pay, to retrieve and care for her daughter. That evening, the child came down with a fever and a debilitating cold, and so bronchitis set-in, resulting in the child coughing all night. Early the next morning, the mother and child had had no sleep, and they went to a walk-in medical clinic. The mother could barely pay the child's medical bill. Moreover, she'd lost a full day's pay. And then, there was the expense of the over-priced medications. This caused the mother's power bill not to be paid, and so the mother was forced to borrow money from her coworkers to keep her lights on. *Mobile Power* will cut-off the power on anyone, who fails to pay their bill. The maddening fact is that power companies generally make anywhere from 1000 to 5000 percent profit. In other words, if your power bill is \$200, and with all things considered, it cost the power company \$4 to \$20 to provide it!

Never let someone tell you that just being cold can't make you sick. It absolutely can. True enough, respiratory illnesses are generally caused by viruses

(rhinoviruses, syncytial viruses, covid viruses, etc.). But those viruses are almost ubiquitously present inside almost people's respiratory system. But when someone becomes extremely cold, that stress causes the person's blood cortisol levels begin to climb, and said cortisol dramatically suppresses the person's immune system (reduced white blood cell production, as well as reduced antibody synthesis by the B cells), and so then, the unchallenged cold virus begins to multiply and wreak havoc; *ipso facto*, getting cold may bring-on a cold. Why do you suppose they're called, 'colds,' and people tend to get more of them in the wintertime? It's not rocket science!

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+ and + immune
+ suppression&hl=en&as_sdt=0&as_vis=1&oi=scholar&
Jq6PZAhUD02MKHUynD8AQgQMIJzAA](https://scholar.google.com/scholar?q=cortisol+and+immune+suppression&hl=en&as_sdt=0&as_vis=1&oi=scholar&Jq6PZAhUD02MKHUynD8AQgQMIJzAA)

[https://jneuroinflammation.biomedcentral.com/
articles/10.1186/s12974-016-0663-y](https://jneuroinflammation.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12974-016-0663-y)

The extremely sick little girl was forced to miss

two weeks of school, leaving her behind in her lessons. In addition, there was yet a second costly visit to the doctor, and additional overpriced medicine, which meant yet another lost payday for the mother. A lawyer might argue that the damages were: the cost of the hairdo, the cost for the doctors visits, the loss of the mother's pay, and the expense of the medicines. But you and I know, those damages are not the most serious. What about the girl falling behind in school? What of the girl's sense of self worth? What of the child's racial perspectives from then on, with regard to white people? What about all the other kids on the bus, and how they perceive and respond to issues involving race? Quite possibly, a permanent scar had been etched into the girl's innocent young psyche. There is the very real chance that the girl might continue to view white people with a jaundice eye. As if white racism against blacks isn't bad enough, these days, America has a fair amount of rebound reverse racism, with blacks unjustly hating innocent whites. And don't think that the white racists don't love that, since it only seems to confirm what they preach to their followers, about blacks being irrational. Correspondingly, there are now black parents, who teach their children that the white race is evil. Both forms of racism are making

things more difficult for our kids. Black parents often don't believe that their sweet child is a racial bigot, mistreating whites. Likewise, whites like to overlook the many forms of racism, which are still perpetrated upon many blacks.

But this is only the beginning of the story about the little black girl and the redneck bus driver, the proverbial icy tip of the deadly iceberg. As I was soon to discover, this pungent little story would involve a few more layers of bigotry, yet to be peeled back. The more I looked into that story, the more shocked I became. Since the bus driver refused to talk with me, I decided to visit the head of the school transportation department for Mobile County. Foolishly, I assumed that the man in charge of the county's school transportation would want to know about such blatant racial abuse, and at the very least, verbally reprimand the abusive driver! *Certainly, the man in charge will want to see justice done!* Without an appointment, I showed-up, only to be informed by his secretary that the head of transportation was still on his usual three hour lunch break. She then laughed, since the woman didn't care that I knew that her boss hardly worked, and just collected his government paycheck. The man had been head of

school transportation for over thirty years. More than a year later, long after this story had ended, I accidentally found-out he'd taken over the job from his uncle.

Apparently, the guy had found a comfortable 'do nothing' niche in the school's transportation system. Thanking the secretary, I told her I'd be back in a while, then wandered around the garage area/motor-pool, where the school buses were being maintained. Spying a fifty cup aluminum coffee urn, I ducked into the mechanics lounge for a cup of joe. Dropping some change into the community coffee jar, I poured myself a styrofoam cup, sat back to relax in one of the slightly greasy overstuffed vinyl covered chairs, and waited for the head of school transportation to return, from his extended lunch. Surprisingly, the coffee had a rich full taste, without much bitterness. I've always found it to be a pleasant surprise, when an unexpected location, produces an excellent cup of java.

After a few minutes, four mechanics, on a break, came strolling into the coffee room, so I introduced myself and struck-up a conversation. The men were all ex-servicemen, and had learned their trade working in various military motor pools. Three were

white, and the smallest man was jet black. They all appeared to good people, so I felt inherently comfortable in explaining why I was there, and I described what I'd been told about the racist woman bus driver, dropping her name in the process. At first, they are silent and just looked at each other, then they began to chuckle. They were fast to inform me that the horrible bigoted woman bus driver was in fact the niece of the head of transportation! She was his brother's daughter. A white mechanic, from Colorado, was particularly vocal in his hatred of the woman. The others just nodded their agreement. And, while they were happy to fill me in on some things, no one would agree to be quoted for the paper, complaining that they didn't want to lose their jobs. Nevertheless, they were happy to give me the lowdown, as they knew it, as long as it was kept off the record. It's been over twenty-five years since they told me this, so I think it's now safe to write about it.

“Yeah their whole redneck family comes from around Summerhill (Alabama), and word is that they're all klan members. Like one hundred years ago, their family migrated down from Pulaski, Tennessee. A half dozen Confederate officers started that nasty little social plague, and that racist family

has been in the klan for generations. Let me tell you, he (the head of transportation) is plenty proud of their klan membership. That dude even has a red blood drop tattooed on the back of his wrinkly old white hand. And, shit man... several of the guys, who work here are black, just like Charley, here.” He said pointing at the small mechanic.

“That motherfucker doesn’t care who he offends. Said he’s been a member of the klan since he was born. Went to cross burnings as a little boy, and even before he was old enough to go to school, he had his own robes and hood. His klan mom sewed it for him. Once we asked him, if’n he’d ever been involved with kill’n black folks, and he smiled, looked all proud, and then he just walked-off to his office. He’s plenty weird... creepy as a dog with antlers. The klan loves the idea that people fear them. They’ve got little else going for em. Hate’s what keeps them going.”

Being unfamiliar with the significance of the blood drop tattoo, I asked, “What’s the deal with the blood drop tattoo on his hand? Does it have something to do with the klan?”

“We all figured the tattoo was probably a klan thing, but we knew better than to ask, him. Then one day, the asshole just up and tells black Charlie here,

that it symbolized a tear shed by Jesus for the white Aryan race. I suppose because they have to put-up with the other races. Like I said, he don't give a rat's ass, about who knows he's a bigot. He's actually proud of being a klan member."

I recalled thinking, that if that story about the tattoo were true, perhaps God's tear, was sympathetically shed for the white Aryan bigots, since He already knew about their eternal roasting. People love to claim that their views are in some way synonymous with those of the deity; that they are the chosen people. No doubt, if there's a God, he or she loves such absurd political attentions. God probably also loves wars, where lots of legalized murder takes place, especially when both sides are completely certain that they're carrying out the Lord's will, whether it's onward Christian soldiers with the cross of Jesus, or seventy-two vestal virgins.

Every zealot is unquestionably right, at least in their own mind. It must be nice to be so certain, and to know your exact place in the scheme of things... to always be right, and seldom be in doubt. I've never meant a Christian, Muslim, Jew, Buddhist, or Hindu, who didn't know they were indubitably correct about their belief. Remember, it wasn't too

long ago, that many of the world's best educated folks 'knew' the earth was fixed in place, and the sun and stars revolved around us. Anyone, who disagreed, was quickly ostracized, or burned at the stake. No doubt, when reading this, you've already read about and deduced many of my foolish foibles.

The bus mechanics also informed me that the head of school transportation had hired at least six other of his racially opinionated white relatives to work in school transportation department: aunts, nieces, and cousins... just a wee bit of illegal nepotism! Seven racially prejudice bus drivers, made me wonder how much damage they'd managed to inflict on the poor unsuspecting school children; especially the black children, but the white kids, as well, by spreading their sick ideas!

Once back from lunch, the head of transportation, much like his bigoted niece, refused to be interviewed. You'd think the man would have welcomed the chance to expound on his social views, and to defend his poor irate niece. Something tells me, that buried deep within the hateful mush of many such people, is an inherent understanding that racism is wrong, so they hide their views, until they find someone who is like minded, or until some naive

young person comes along, who is susceptible to their influence. But people, who love to hate, enjoy the like minded, just like most people enjoy those, who share their views.

When I finally saw the head of transportation, just like the mechanics had mentioned, the red blood drop tattoo was on the back of his wrinkly old hand, and I did so want to ask him about it, and about his obvious nepotism, but showing him my state-approved press pass just angered him. There was no intimidating the klansman, at least not with a mere press card. Then again, perhaps it had intimidated him, and that's why he refused the interview.

“I’ve got nothing to say to your nigger newspaper, Mr. Bone. *He knows I work for the minority newspaper.* I’ve got an awful lot to do around here, and I don’t have no more time to waste on your stupid nonsense, so you can leave. Get outta my office for I call the police!” He stated, just having returned from his lunch.

Looking down and starting to turn away, the man gave me a small dismissive backhand wave, with his blood drop hand. No doubt, the demands of his important job were so pressing that he had to shorten his lunch breaks to a mere three hours!

Sparing the reader the frustrations of my efforts, suffice it to say, that no one in the county school transportation department would agree to go on the record. Nobody wanted to risk losing their job! For many people, their job is like a necessary evil.

Nevertheless, what I'd found during the trip to the transportation department had inspired me to continue to pursue the story, but from another angle, one which would also prove unproductive, yet nevertheless satisfying, in a completely unexpected way. If the head of transportation wouldn't speak with me, I decided to go to his boss. *Certainly, I'll get a sympathetic ear with the Superintendent of Schools.* A few days later, the head of the School Board, i.e., the superintendent, the preverbal 'Super,' granted me an interview, and so I took the little girl's mother along, to better explain the circumstances. While there, the mother spoke, describing what had happened to her child, and I played excerpts of my taped interviews of the of the students, who rode the bus. He asked to be given the tape, but it was my only copy, so I told him I'd try to get him a copy. He then said that if I left it with him, he'd make his own copy, and return me the tape. I simply told him that I couldn't release the tape without my boss's okay.

The Super was warm and cordial, claiming that he didn't know anything about the alleged incident, with the girl being ordered to run out into the traffic during the rainstorm, nor did he admit knowing anything about the supposed nepotism in his transportation department. He seemed to be genuinely shocked, and I fell for his sincerity act. During the meeting, I mentioned the fact that most of his employees felt that the head of transportation was a *KKK* member, but since I didn't want anyone to be fired, I claimed I couldn't remember their names, and gave vague inaccurate descriptions, and I said that the people I'd spoken with were four female bus drivers, and not the four male bus mechanics.

Before finishing-up, I mentioned the blood drop tattoo and its significance. It was a bit disturbing that the superintendent again asked me to try to 'carefully' remember the employee's names, I'd spoken with, and to describe them, again. I could tell, that he wanted me to ask why he was wanting their names, but I was afraid he might just lie, and say it was so he could consult further with them, to properly investigate the issue; but like I said, I simply described four factitious female school bus drivers, picking their descriptions from four secretaries, who

worked at the community college.

Our meeting concluded with the Super's seemingly sincere promise to investigate the issues, including: the racist bus driver, and the head of transportation, with his nepotism, his *KKK* blood drop tattoo, and his three hour lunches. The Super gave his 'solemn promise,' that he'd report any and all related findings to the *Mobile Voice*, 'just as soon as possible.' He made a dramatic performance, at offering the mother his heart felt sympathy for what had happened to her little girl. Call me stupid, but I candidly believed him. I'm embarrassed to say that the superintendent solidly fooled me!

"Ma'am, I am terribly concerned about your little daughter. If any of these allegations are proven true, I'll certainly be deeply shocked, but if true, I'll do all I can to rectify them. Regardless, you can rest assured that I will fully investigate these very serious allegations, concerning your young girl, and that woman school bus driver. Also, I'll be looking into the purported cases of nepotism in transportation; as alleged by Mr Bone, here. I'll even investigate the blood drop tattoo. These things will be a top priority for me, and I guarantee you that justice will be served. I'll very quickly communicate my findings to

your fine newspaper, sir. Thank you both for calling these issues to my attention. Be it understood, that I do not tolerate racism nor nepotism, and I mean that! Please feel free to contact me.” Thus, the Super ended our meeting.

Walking to my car, I vacuously felt that the Super would properly investigate, and get to the bottom of things, correct the wrongs, and divulge his findings to *The Mobile Voice*. I was a fool. You’ve got to appreciate the skill with which a politician can distort, if not, obliterate the truth; better yet, how they can portend genuine sincerity. Considering how skilled I am in those very same talents, I am shamed to say the Super suckered me. I would have spotted the lies, but the man’s elevated position is what tricked me. *Certainly the Superintendent of Schools, the leader our children, is a trustworthy guy*. But then, I suppose many people might like to image that most of the world’s leaders are basically honest people. Both the mother and I left the meeting, feeling that the Super was a man of his word, and that justice would soon be done.

Of course, nothing came of the meeting. The abuse of the little girl, the nepotism, and the blood drop were all completely disregarded, literally swept

under the overpriced ever filthy political carpet. As the days passed, I left messages with the Super's secretary, but if they were indeed passed on, they apparently fell on deaf ears. The poor secretary repeatedly stated that the Super was 'looking into things.' This disappointing stalling technique may have discouraged some, but ultimately, it inspired me. How often has justice been ignored in the name of political designs?

Right after the first interview with the Super, I imprudently wrote the story for *The Mobile Voice*, including what turned-out to be the hollow promises made by the superintendent to check into things, whence my ill timed article had made it seem as if the superintendent was genuinely concerned about the allegations, and was honestly investigating them. Like an idiot, I had made him look like a good guy, more or less giving him advanced credit, but of course, the superintendent may no effort to investigate. He never returned any of my calls.

All the Super would have had to do to investigate the allegations was to talk to a couple of the students on the bus, along with a few random calls to various people in the transportation department. Yet most likely, he instead made a call to the head of

transportation to warn him, that I was investigating him and his niece, and that he (the head of transportation) had some traitors in his employment (who the Super thought were four bus drivers, but who were actually the mechanics), and to make sure no one in his department ever talked with me, again. Maybe the Super had suggested that Mr.

Transportation get the stupid blood drop tattoo removed from his hand. Looking back, I should have gone back to the transportation department and checked on the tattoo, but I never did, I took a different tack. After a certain school board meeting, I would have my revenge and drop the issue.

The week following the meeting with the Super the girl's mother called, to tell me that the redneck bus driver was no longer driving her daughter's bus, so I called Larry, one of the white mechanics, I'd previously spoken with at the transportation department. He confirmed the black mother's observation, but said the female redneck bus driver had been given a shorter 'better route in an affluent white neighborhood.' In effect, she'd been kicked upstairs, a promotion of sorts. *Well, at least she's not around any black kids.* It was quite likely that the Super and the head of transportation were your

proverbial Mobile ‘good-ole-boys.’

They’d probably talked about what a pest I was, and that it was best to just not to grant me anymore interviews, and that I’d eventually give-up and go away. After all, the only article I had written, concerning the Super had casted him in a favorable light. I thought about writing another article, discussing how the Super had made promises he didn’t keep, but I never got around to it. Instead, I took a different route to pay him back. Besides, a second article, attempting to awkwardly negate what I’d written in the first, would have looked like sour grapes on my part, and made me appear somewhat foolish, which indeed I’d been. Besides, there was no telling what kind of pernicious *KKK* playmates the superintendent of schools and the head of transportation had amongst the local politicians and officials, i.e., cops, commissioners, clerks, secretaries, the mayor, the sheriff, judges, etc. At first, I thought about things like: trying to catch the Super in the dark parking lot, after working late one night. Another idea was to set-up the Super for an unexpected photo opportunity, with one of Pretty Tommy’s aforementioned irresistible prostitutes, i.e., Cream, or the highly erotic Yuki; on the other hand, I

wasn't completely sure about the Super's proclivity.

A month went by and still no call or message had come from the duplicitous superintendent. If you look-up the word 'politician' in the dictionary, to be accurate it should just say... *An elected prevaricator, whose only honest interests are money and power, usually, with a sociopath personality.* The best of politicians are often the very worst of humanity. My father, who had repeatedly put his life on the line for his country, did not hate his enemies, nearly as much as he did his own country's politicians. Dad despised all politicians, and that means literally all of them, regardless of their party. Dad used to tell me that there is not such a thing as an honest politician, and unlike politicians, my Dad never lied.

The story of the little child and the racist bus driver had solidly infuriated me. You couldn't have found a more innocent and sweet child, than that small black girl. In fact, the aforementioned story about thousands of blacks felons receiving unfair treatment, under the cruel misuse of the *Habitual Offender Statute*, had failed to upset me, as did that single small cruel act, by the hate-filled racist white female bus driver. Perhaps, it was the fact that the little girl was so virtuous; whereas, most of the

repeat felons were usually far from blameless.

Because the Super had so thoroughly ignored the school bus incident, I totally lost my objectivity as a reporter. In fact, I'd balled up my impartiality, and tossed it into the round file, opting instead for good old-fashioned revenge, something outside normal boundaries, not the usual revenge-by-ink, and certainly not revenge-by-court. Sure, reporters are not supposed to become emotionally involved in the stories they cover, but the pitiful little girl and the mother's outrage had managed to ignite a fire in me, and out of that fire rose-up a simple, but highly potent, little gem of an idea, though it came together rather gradually. First, I had to make sure that the mother actually had the incentive to carry it out. Jess had told me to just move-on to the next story, and forget about the school bus story.

About five weeks after the visit to the superintendent's office, the mother again took to phoning me at the newspaper. She just couldn't let it go. It was a slap in the face that the Super refused to give us so much as an update. He'd just disregarded us. The mother simply called to vent on me, loudly shouting her frustrations into the phone, and hurting my ear.

“Mr. Joey, have you gotten a call from that lying snake of a school super, yet? I’m positive that he’s not checking into things, like he promised us. He doesn’t care... a worthless bastard, Mr. Joey! How can that racist bus driver be allowed to treat my baby girl like that, and nobody does anything? And, to make a bad matter worse, that horrible woman bus driver gets a better job? And, you made the Super look good in that article you wrote. Everything that you and I did, just made things worse! The Super and transportation man are nothing but sick redneck racists, and these are the men in charge of our schools... in charge of our children! Can’t you do something about this? What’s the world coming to? I’m so angry!” *She reminds me of Dad, wanting to do the right thing.*

It was right before the mother phoned that the idea had begun to formulate, but it was during the call that concept of revenge, and its’ actual methodology began to materialize. Though far from complete, there was something germinating, but I just hadn’t gotten a clear impression, yet. It was still a vague idea, to somehow harness the mother’s anger, and direct it toward the Super.

“I’m sorry, ma’am. Haven’t heard so much as a

peep from that useless politician. I've called several times and left messages with his poor secretary, but you can tell that the poor woman is just trying to let me know, that there's no point in calling, anymore. She's only doing her master's bidding, earning her living, and she not wanting to get fired, by pushing our agenda too hard. People are terrified of losing their jobs, these days, you know. Most people are only one paycheck from not affording the rent or power bill... one paycheck from making a little cardboard sign, and doing the homeless thing on the street corner. I should have expected this. After all, he's nothing but a publicly elected official. My Dad always warned me about politicians. But, I do have something of an idea, I'm working on. I'd like to discuss it with you. Are you're free to meet some time, today? Maybe a cup of coffee at the *Burger King*? It's about half way between us, at *Town and Country Plaza*?" I asked.

Three hours later, I was seated across from the mother inside the fast-food joint. It was too late for lunch, and too early for dinner, so she and I were the only ones sitting in the austere corporately designed all-plastic customer dining area, to talk over coffee. We sat on the kind of furniture that could no doubt

withstand an atomic bomb blast, and perhaps even a bunch of hyperactive kids. The mother was still being driven by her molten rage. *The coffee is only going to intensify her fury. Should have bought her a Sprite, instead.* I marveled at how long she had been able to remain angry for so many weeks. *I wonder how she sleeps?* Most likely, her outrage was proportionate to the love she felt for her child, and for the hope she held for her oppressed race.

Now that I have a child, I sympathize and better understand her frustration, as well as her anger. Her hatred of the good-ole-boy system, and what they'd wrongfully done to her child was visceral. Most likely, it was her unflagging passion, which was breathing inspiration into my a partially developed idea... still forming, and which I was about to share with her. Perchance, the idea would be a means of giving the mother her heart's desire... to deliver a decisive blow to the ugly face of racism... quite literally, a physical blow.

At that point, the idea was incomplete, more of a feeling than it was a fully formed concept. Exactly how the plan was to play-out was yet subliminal, nevertheless, I realized it was coming, and was not to be stopped. *How I love incomplete ideas... their*

uncertainty generates excitement. It's as if you know the notion is there, yet it's just beyond your grasp. Perhaps, the secret to creativity is to not try too hard, but just to relax and let it come, in its' own good time. The sweetest part of discovery is the search. It's the same in science... the art of discovery is the jubilant juggling of different thoughts, memories, and feelings, then a shape begins to take shape, just past the edge of darkness, then voila! Discovery often leads to more questions and still further speculations, *ad infinitum*, until the three pounds of tangled-up neurons cease to fire, or senility or geriatric drugs dim the three pounds, until there's no point... no joy.

“What's your idea?” The mother asked.

There are few things which can express rage like a mother, whose innocent baby has been wronged by a hate-filled contemptible prick. In that mother's case there were three such hateful souls: the bus driver, the Super, and the head of transportation. Just sitting in the mother's presence, I could sense the explosive power, barely below the surface... *Krakatoa move over. If we could harness such anger, we wouldn't need the sun.* The partly formed idea, I was about to propose, would attempt to do just that... harness her rage. My target would be the lying good-for-nothing

superintendent of schools, and indirectly the head of school transportation, Mr. Blood-drop. First, I took a sip of the cheap *Burger King* coffee, swallowed, shook-off the bitterness, then proposed the first, non-violent portion of the idea.

“You might want to think about attending the next school board meeting. At the end of each of those meetings, there’s a time for an ‘open-mike’ session, where concerned citizens, usually unhappy parents, can walk-up to the podium, with its’ microphone, and talk about their concerns, in front of everyone who’s there. There’s usually a two or three hundred people at these assemblies, and they tend to be the most concerned and active parents in the schools. Believe you me, they are going to listen closely to anything you say. Once you’ve got the open mike, you can talk about whatever involves the school system! You wouldn’t be the first angry parent to do this. Who knows... the media might even be there. I know some people at Channel 6. You know ma’am, if good people do nothing evil proliferates, and what that racist bus driver, Mr. Blood-drop, and the Super did to your sweet child, is nothing short of evil! The word is that that bus driver’s and Mr. Blood-drop’s entire back-woods family belong to the

klan. It's just lucky that your baby wasn't killed, running-out into the highway, during that terrible storm, or died of pneumonia, after being made sick that day! This cancerous evil in our school system will only grow, if good people like you, continue to allow them to get away with it. *I feel like a black Baptist preacher.* If you don't stand-up to them, those bigots will always know they can abuse black children, without fear of retribution."

"Right about now, they probably are feeling bullet-proof, that we've forgotten about what they did, and so they can continue doing whatever they want, because people like you and I will just sit there and do nothing. You need to stand-up and speak your mind, and the school board meeting might be the perfect forum! The Super will never see you coming, until after the meeting starts, and he doesn't come into the meeting room, until the rest of the board and the public have been seated. He likes to come into the room last, as if he's the judge entering a courtroom. If you like, I'd be happy to help you to prepare your presentation. There's a fair chance, I can get some of the TV people to attend the meeting." Thus, I presented the first part of the developing idea.

The mother appeared to silently give it some serious thought. After a lengthy ten-second pause, she smiled, nodded, and responded.

“I think that going to the school board meeting might just be a great idea, sir. {Never have I gotten accustomed to being called, sir. When you’ve committed as many wrongs as I have, you never feel deserving of the title.} I’m going to that meeting and tell’n everyone, about what happened to my baby... all about that evil woman, and talk about all those redneck relatives work’n for that transportation man, with his God damn racist blood drop tattoo. And, I’m also going to tell that useless Super about how he did nothing but lie to us, with his false promises. If you don’t mind, I’m going to use parts of your newspaper article in my presentation, Mr. Bone. Those horrible bigoted people are not going to be getting away with this shit any longer, Mr. Bone. I’m putting their evil deeds in the middle of the street, and I hope you’re right about the television people maybe being there. You gonna be there, too. Right?” She said these things, while fiery passion, which oozed from every pore of her body.

“I wouldn’t miss your speech at the school board meeting for all the tea in China. It’s been about seven

weeks, since we meant with the Super and we haven't heard so much as a peep from him. He won't answer his phone, won't return any of my calls. That lying man plainly doesn't care about what happened to your child. And, stupid me, I made him look good in that last article I wrote. *I'm sure stirring the pot.* And yes, I'd be honored, if you used the newspaper article in your speech. If you want, and Jess approves it, I'd certainly be happy to report on your speech, and the school board's reaction. Of course, if the TV covers it, the little newspaper might be relatively insignificant. Your blessed child will sure be proud of you, for sticking up for her, and exposing those racist hayseeds for what they are, but kids aren't allowed in those meetings. Still, if it gets on the TV, she'll see what you did. This will be something of a pinnacle in the raising of your child. That presentation may be the greatest thing either of us has ever done, but your child will know you did it for her. You know, being a racist is one thing, but taking your hatred out on a child is another; that's the worst type of racism. Those guys definitely need their shit put in the street, and you're the one who can do it." I encouraged her.

The proposed school board meeting was one week away... less than seven days to prepare her

presentation for the public ‘open-mike’ session. While sitting there with the child’s mother, the next part of the scheme just seemed to magically materialize, much as the little green grass snake had materialized that day that my dear Mom had fed me the hot red pepper. The second part of my scheme against the Super was a bit more sinister and fairly manipulative. And in all honestly, I probably did know how it would work. Right after the mother agreed to make the speech, that’s when the last part of the plan appeared like a minor gift from God. It was definitely the most pernicious and dangerous aspect of that plan. It took a few seconds to solidify, edging its way into consciousness. There was no having to think about it, no real conscious effort went into it.

The menacing little epiphany, just suddenly came into being; probably from the devious angles of my darker gray mush, for as it turned out, the plan could have easily spelled death, for the Super, but in that moment, my brain chose to overlooked that very real possibility. First, the simple idea was to make a protest sign for the mother to carry into the school board meeting. It would not be the first time that someone had brought a protest sign into a school board meeting. The second aspect to the idea was

that the sign would serve a dual purpose, for it was not going to be made of some flimsy harmless cardboard, but of sturdy, more heavy duty stuff. In fact, the sign would be built more like a weapon... a weapon disguised as a colorful informative protest sign!

“If you’d like, I could possibly help you a bit, by maybe making a sign for you to carry, into the school board meeting... perhaps, it could be a protest sign; you know... something about the school bus or the mean bus driver. Nothing too negative or cheaply done; something to grab people’s attention.” I helpfully volunteered.

“Thank you, Joey. I’d appreciate that. A sign would be nice.” The mother responded. *Hallelujah!*

It was then that I clearly knew what the sign was going to be like. After leaving the mother at *Burger King*, I drove straight to the local Channel 6 television station, and went into the news department; how I loved having a press card. The little plastic card made me a member of a highly exclusive club, a family of bright energetic folks, who were charged with keeping the world informed about current events, the truth of things. Today, the media has become more like propaganda machines. Mass

media is using democratic or republican; one extreme or the other. Moreover, much of the news today, resembles petty gossip... the politicians are typically more ruthless and less educated... the reporting is more biased and superficial... less interest in science... less interest in art... more focus on celebrities and sensationalism... more attention to political mistakes, more interest in power than in peace.

Oh! And don't forget about the weather. What a joke weather reporting has become. If a small rain storm looms in the distance, the weather anchor makes it sound like massive death and destruction is imminent. Every time there's a hint of wind and lightning, they put out a tornado warning! Weather people begin to foam at the mouth, if bad weather is coming. They obviously love it! I guess it makes them feel useful, as if they're saving us, even though it's all done with machines and math, well beyond the weather reporter's comprehension... probably a bunch of interconnected regression formulas, involving wind measurements, temperature variations, barometric pressure readings, assessments of water temperatures and currents, etc.

Quite possibly, the *CIA* controls much of the

international news, via various medias, telling them, when they can and cannot release certain critical types of information, not just because it might allegedly jeopardize national security, or endanger the cover of some agent, which sometimes may be true, but more often than not, said info may clue the American people into the fact that we start wars and conflicts, just so the military industrial complex can make ungodly amounts of money, or because we're looking to steal some other country's oil, national treasury, opium, minerals, gold mines, rare earth minerals, etc. In some respects, the intelligence community, politicians, lobbyists, and the military industrial complex are probably all practically one-in-the-same.

Two hours later, I was headed home from the Channel 6 news department, having briefed a few of the news crew about the story of the little black girl, the racist school bus driver, the seven cases of nepotism in the school transportation department, the head of transportation with his telling blood-drop tattoo, the bus driver's refusal to be interviewed, the apparent hollow promises made by the superintendent of schools, as well as the fact that the mother was hopping mad, and soon to make an

impassioned speech at the upcoming school board meeting. I did not mention the protest sign, I was yet to construct. The TV news crew seemed sincerely interested and promised to cover the event. Things were starting to fall into place.

There in my garage was a pile of scrap lumber, stacked against one wall; it was left over from when my home had needed repair, after a hurricane had viciously torn-off one complete exterior wall, in the middle of the night, forcing my daughter and I to run out into the storm, to seek shelter at a neighbors. The hardest part about repairing the home was getting the damn insurance company to pay what they owed. After countless trips to the local insurance offices, many homeowners simply gave-up on trying to get their insurance money, and you can bet that the insurance companies count on a certain percentage of their customers just giving-up on their claim. Almost universally, insurance companies do their level best to avoid paying-out legitimate claims. They often ignore people's repeated phone calls, and drag their heels, attempting to wear people down, and just wait them out. Maybe on the fourth or fifth appeal, they'll actually do the right thing. They are not helpful like a good neighbor, but more like the bad

drunk, that you pray will move out of the neighborhood.

In my limited opinion, the best way to deal with insurance claims is never do so on the phone, nor in face-to-face conversation, but communicate solely by registered mail, since such written material is admissible in court, and juries love to vote for the underdog. Furthermore, when you do things in writing, the insurance company knows you mean business. They realize that you're approaching them, with the intent of one day taking them to court. Insurance companies also control the neighboring state of Florida, where countless hurricane-related claims have also gone unpaid.

Rummaging through the lumber pile in the garage, I selected a strong piece of oak, from which to make the long handle of the sign. It was an eight foot long two by four, which I cut down, into an eight foot long two by two. The sign itself, I cut from a piece of $\frac{3}{4}$ inch heavy duty plywood. Using a jigsaw, I had cut out a piece, forming the silhouette of a school bus. It was about two and a half feet long and about sixteen inches high. Not wanting the mother to get splinters, and to be able to maintain a good grip, I used a disc sander to smooth the surfaces

and edges.

I'd gone to the hardware store and purchased two cans of enamel paint: one pint of bright yellow and a pint of black, as well as a few heavy brass two and one-half inch wood screws. First, I painted the wooden school bus with the bright hi-gloss yellow enamel. After the third coat, the smooth painted finish looked perfect, and the hard yellow enamel brightly reflected the light from the single 100 watt bulb, hanging from wire in the ceiling of my garage. For contrast, I painted the sign's pole with the high gloss black. The next day, after buying some cheap hard paper stencils, and again using the black enamel paint, I printed four words on both sides of the yellow school bus sign. Then using a few carefully placed strips of masking tape, and a thin artist's brush, I filled-in the details: the bus wheels, the window frames, the horizontal bus stripping, etc. The four words, I'd painted on both sides of the sign read, SCHOOL BUS FROM HELL; where normally, the name of a school would have been painted.

Finally, I drilled holes and used five large brass wood screws to securely attach the staff, to the heavy duty plywood bus, two screwed in from the handle side, and three from the sign side. All five holes were

counter sunk. The screws more than firmly anchored the sign to the black pole, since I put a dab of glue in each hole before I screwed-in the five brass screws. The entire creation, pole and sign, weighed about twenty-five pounds, and looked to have been professionally manufactured. From its appearance, it seemed like a harmless sign, but in heft and form, that sign was something like a heavy battle ax, and the big boned black mother, who would carry it, appeared to be both strong and fairly athletic, not to mention passionately motivated by the grievous wrong her innocent child had been unmercifully forced to endure. By simply making the sign, I ran no risk. Waiting for the day of the school board meeting, I was beside myself with anticipation.

That evening, I called the Channel 6 TV news department to confirm that they'd be at the school board meeting. One hour before the scheduled meeting, I pulled into the parking lot for the school board building. The mother was already there, calmly sitting in her car, reviewing her speech. She had not requested my help in preparing the speech, and didn't seem remotely nervous. Pulling the heavy sign out of my car, I walked over to present the yellow and black stealth weapon to the mother. She

saw me coming and stepped out of her car, to accept my gift.

“Thank you. This is the perfect sign for me to carry... The SCHOOL BUS FROM HELL. It really says it all. Thank you so much, Joey.” She said pointing at the words on the sign.

“May it serve you well. This sign’s heavy as a medieval battle ax, so be careful with it. You could really hurt someone with this monstrous sign.” Then, I swung it around a bit to subliminally illustrate my point.

“Maybe, I should have made it out of something lighter, but I just used the leftover lumber I had laying around my garage. The message on this sign, SCHOOL BUS FROM HELL, should become clear as you explain what happened to your poor child, and how you and your child have received no justice from that lying superintendent. Don’t be nervous... you’re going to do a great job, cuz all you have to do is tell the truth. As they say... the truth will set you free. You’re doing the right thing for all the kids!”

By swinging the sign and making the little speech, I was hoping that I had firmly planted the ‘battle ax’ seed deep in the fertile soil of her anger-

soaked limbic brain. There was little doubt, that the superintendent was going to be a challenge for the enraged mother, and so the potential for conflict was palpable. The arrogant Super was known for being overly assertive and authoritative in the school board meetings, sometimes shouting down opponents, and rudely dismissing anyone, who challenged his sovereignty. Conceivably, he was over compensating. Still, he was known to rule the meetings with an iron fist, even though he was about as masculine as J. Edgar Hoover, or Adolph Hitler. Both of those men were also famous for their public tirades, and their displays of angry pseudo masculinity.

How so many people missed the obviously effeminate gestures, that those two historical figures plainly displayed, is beyond my understanding. So many heterosexual males worshipped those men as heroes. But, judge for yourself, just watch them on their old films. In my opinion, you'd have to be blind to miss what I'm saying. All those ultra-macho German males following limp wrist Adolph, and all those masculine *FBI* agents following girly-man Hoover! Please don't think for a minute that I am criticizing gays, or that I'm saying that there aren't great gay athletes or wonderful gay leaders, when I

say that it's hard to imagine Hitler or Hoover playing football or basketball. Their entire lives may have been one giant series of compensatory acts. I do find it odd that so many Nazis military men, who were well known for being highly prejudice against homosexuals, and *FBI* men, who also tended to be less accepting of gays, followed such overly effeminate men. On the other hand, maybe Hitler and Hoover weren't gay. I leave it up to you the reader to decide.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?
v=UDCVdh08TYM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UDCVdh08TYM)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?
v=FZIIA19c9-0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FZIIA19c9-0)

But if indeed Hitler and Hoover were gay, as I suspect they were, they definitely weren't like the vast majority of other gays, in that they were clearly evil. Evil obviously has no particular sexual orientation or level of intelligence. It seems astonishing to me that not much written material has been devoted to the fact that their possible suppressed or closeted sexualities could have

contributed to their destructive lives.

“You can just stand the end of the sign’s pole on the ground to support its weigh, and rest the side of pole, against the inside curve of your shoulder, while you deliver your speech. The television people will probably be in the meeting room, so please make sure that you keep one side of the sign facing the TV camera, so it can focus in on the words...SCHOOL BUS FROM HELL. There’s a better than even chance that you’ll be on the ten o’clock Channel 6 News, tonight. When you get inside the meeting room, you’ll see the TV camera on top of a big wooden tripod, most likely in one of the back corners of the room.”

“Good luck with your speech... Remember it’s not just for your little girl, but it’s for all the children, black and white... to change the system which has allowed that kind of harm to be perpetrated on them. This may be the only time that the racist bus driver can be stopped. It’s a big step toward ridding our school system of such racism. We need a superintendent, who honestly wants to get rid of bigotry, not cover it up, and allow it to survive. And, we need a new head of transportation, one without a blood drop tattoo, and maybe we need

more black representation in the school board. Half the students are black, but only five percent of the teachers and none of the principals are black. By the way, if anyone should ask you about this sign; I didn't make it. Since I'm a reporter, I've supposed to at least appear to be impartial, even though I'm not. Okay? Just tell anyone who asks, that a friend made the sign for you, or that you made it yourself, but whatever you do, leave me out of it. If people find-out, I might lose my press card."

Lastly, I had briefed her on questions the media folk might later be asking, and made a few suggestions about what she might want to consider saying. Again, I begged her not to give me credit for making the SCHOOL BUS FROM HELL sign. Being totally fed-up with the good-ole-boy system, my objectivity as a reporter had been launched into deep space, a few thousand light years, outside the solar system. Unlike space, rules have their limits. Rules are made for reasons, but sometimes should be broken for better reasons.

The mother went into the meeting room early, to secure her seat adjacent to the public speaking podium, with its attached microphone. The TV news crew was already there, setting-up their camera

equipment. Briefly entering the meeting room, I pointed-out the location of the camera crew to the mother, and she appropriately spun the school bus sign, to face the camera lens, then I walked back outside into the parking lot, not wanting to be in front of the camera, when it fired-up for the evening news. When the people stopped entering the building, I waited a few minutes and entered, but remained just outside the meeting room door, standing in the hallway. The room was packed; in fact, a few people stood propped-up along the back wall of the room. The open-mike session was always the last thing on the agenda. Wanting to avoid the camera, I had no intention of sticking my head into the meeting room, so I positioned myself in the hall, where I could not be seen by the camera, but I could still see a large portion of the room.

Listening to the Super, discussing the news from the last meeting, while the door frame blocked the camera from recording me, I had a clear view of the mother, the podium with its gooseneck microphone, half the audience, and with a slight head movement, I could see the five school board members, sitting along their huge elevated U-shaped table. They looked like a panel of judges. The mother just sat

there reviewing her speech. For the first forty-five minutes, the meeting focused on the old and new business, discussing and voting on various educational, administrative, procedural, and financial issues. During that time, all the various board members and some of the audience, would periodically glance at the sign, with its weird few words... SCHOOL BUS FROM HELL! Periodic frowns in the crowd and on the faces of the board members, indicated that people were curious about, the yellow school bus sign. The mother just continued to patiently sit next to the podium, to listen, silently perusing her notes, and patiently waiting her opportunity. Her left hand propped-up the sign and her notes were in her right.

A worrisome look would periodically pass across the face of the superintendent: a brief frown, immediately followed by a phony look of concentration, then he'd briefly smile. There was nothing the Super could do about the school bus sign, since protest signs of various sorts had often been used at the school board meetings. Equally disturbing for the Super was the fact that a local news crew was present, with their giant TV camera, with its protruding eyeball-like lens, pointed directly

at him, mounted atop its tall wooden tripod. No one at the meeting, aside from the mother, the news crew, the Super, and myself, knew the significance of the yellow school bus sign. I must admit, I did admire my handy work. The high gloss yellow and black finish gleamed brilliantly in the bright lights of the meeting room, a room of otherwise bland colors, and the words SCHOOL BUS FROM HELL, were just provocative enough, to cause heads to regularly swivel in its direction, followed by some hushed murmuring.

Throughout the meeting, the Super would continue to cast a worried glance at the shiny yellow school bus shaped sign, as well as at the TV news crew. It was easy to see that the sign and the camera lens were eating a hole in his soul. No doubt, he figured the. Other would be easy to rhetorically overwhelm, after all, he was in charge and the mother had behaved in a reserved fashion when we'd gone to see him at his office. What the Super didn't realize was that while the mother had little education, she was inherently shrewd, intensely worshipped her child, was extremely well prepared, but most impressively, she burned with the desire for justice. While hell has no fury like a woman scorned,

hell itself may fear the fury of a good black mother, whose blessed child has been grievously wronged by a loathsome racist.

The Super knew he had lied and purposely dropped the ball, about following-up on the investigation of the school bus incident, and by doing nothing, had in fact protected Mr. Blood-drop, an outspoken member of the illustrious *KKK*. The Super and the mother were both running directly at me, and the proverbial manure was about to hit the high speed fan, to be spread far and wide, by the local television news. The channel 6 broadcast covered the entire state of Alabama, the southern half of Mississippi up to Tupelo, and northwest Florida, and east over to Fort Walton. That total broadcast area was populated by roughly ten million people; a fair percentage of which watched the nightly news.

Since there was no cable TV back then, there were only eight channels to watch in Mobile, with the local Channel 6 being by the most popular. Many people religiously watched the news, especially the Southern conservatives. In the deep south, watching the nightly news was considered to be patriotic thing to do. People, who didn't keep-up with the news were often subject to ridicule. *Why is it that southern*

christian conservatives tend to be more judgmental and less forgiving? After the business portion of the meeting had ended, it was at last time for the open-mike public forum. *The mother looks confident.* She stood and took hold of the podium. The Super saw this and knew he didn't want her to speak, so he hurriedly thanked everyone for coming, then actually tried to prematurely adjourn the meeting, hoping to cancel the open-mike session.

“Well, thanks for coming everyone... that concludes this meeting. I move that this school board meeting is now formally adjourned. Someone second my motion, and we're out of here.” The superintendent nervously spoke, looking at the other board members to second his panicky motion, but no one did. They too had seen the woman with the big yellow school bus sign and likely wanted to know what she had to say.

The Super was praying that one of the board members would quickly second his motion, so he could avoid the mother. Without receiving the seconding of his motion to adjourn, he still banged the gavel on the table top, and stood-up to leave. *He's fuck'n terrified of the mother!* At the same instant, the camera man on the TV news crew loudly shouted.

“What’s the rush, superintendent? We want the public’s open-mike session? There are a lot of people here, who’ve come to present their ideas and grievances. We all want to hear what that lady with the yellow school bus sign as to say; besides, this meeting hasn’t lasted very long, and you didn’t get the seconding of your motion to end the meeting; besides, what’s the hurry, Super?” *Good move, cameramen!*

With that comment from one of the news crew, the other members of the school board, as well as the audience all nodded their agreement. *Well, the Super failed in his desperate attempt to shut her up. He’s trapped!* The people and board were obviously all curious about the yellow bus sign and wanted to know what was behind it. A few others in the audience held-up their notes, indicating that they too had things to say. So, the anxious superintendent swallowed hard and was forced to bite the bullet. With a forlorn look of desperation, and a woeful attempt at a smile, he responded. Everyone noticed the superintendent’s anxiousness, and a notable murmur had filled the room. *Time to face the music, asshole.*

“Oh! I’m sorry folks. Okay. The public open-mike

session just slipped my mind. I've been so busy. The mike is now open. Is there anyone who wishes to..." He said this with a smile, but then the smile failed as the corners of his mouth quickly began to turn down. To cover his angst, he just briefly rubbed the side of his hand across his mouth, and sat back down.

Before the Super could finish his question, the indefatigable black mother had already had her notes on the podium, and was bending the flexible metal gooseneck, to carefully position the microphone adjacent to her mouth. Her grabbing and bending the gooseneck made a couple of booming sounds come over the room speakers. She then looked around, at the local news crew, tapped on the microphone to make sure it was working, and using her left hand she rotated the yellow school bus sign, so that one side faced the TV camera. *That black woman is large and in-charge!* The school bus sign stood tall nestled in the crook of her left shoulder. The mother was strictly business, as all eyes, as well as the camera lens, were trained on her, and on the sign shaped and painted-up like a school bus.

Before leaving home, I'd preset my VCR to record the nightly news. When the channel 6 news played, the camera had periodically zoomed in on the

colorful heavy plywood sign with its bold words, SCHOOL BUS FROM HELL, filling the TV screen. The sign had accidentally blocked-out the filming of one of the five school board members. Ironically, the one school board member, who was blocked by the sign, was the only black member, who was black, giving the illusion, that the entire school board was white. On the other hand, the board might as well have been totally white, for all the good that particular black member did for his race. According to the newspaper owner-operator, Jess, being an Uncle Tom is how the guy had gotten the job to begin with; and sure enough, during the entire meeting that evening, with each and every issue, the black man had allied himself with the Super. If the Super smiled the black guy smiled. If the Super frowned with disapproval, so did the black board member. Jess hated the Uncle Tom, almost as badly as he hated the black Baptist ministers. Perchance, the highly intelligent Jess never appreciated the very obvious fact that most people just don't have the where-with-all to live life on their own terms, as Jess did. Perhaps, Jess was so carried away with his own success, that he had a lack of tolerance for some people.

At that point, the superintendent was at a

complete loss for a way out of his dilemma. For the Super, the mother's presence was like a guillotine, hanging over his head, just waiting to drop. The fingers of his right hand had begun to nervously drum on the table. It seemed that the Super's only hope was if the black mother completely bungled her speech. Feigning complete surprise, he sat back down in his leather swivel throne, and continued to babble his weak contrived excuse.

"Oh, I didn't realize... Guess there's someone, who wants to say something... Okay, what would you like to say, ma'am?" He nervously permitted the mother. *He's nervous as a virgin, caught-up in a prison riot.* His fractured smile was nothing more than a display of tightly clenched teeth, as one might do, after brushing, to inspect them in the mirror. His hands then moved to his lap to hold each other, making him look like a small frustrated child, who needed to go to the bathroom. *This is great, shit!*

First, the mother calmly introduced herself and graciously thanked the board and the audience for the opportunity to express her concerns, then she launched into a clear methodical and lethal delivery. It was a deliberately slow weighted delivery, where each word was clearly pronounced. Although clearly

female, the manner in which the mother spoke her material reminded me of the distinctive way in which James Earl Jones delivers his lines. The woman had no butterflies, only a burning desire for justice. It was plain that she had painstakingly crafted her words and carefully rehearsed, since most of the time she didn't look at her notes. The speech was well dispatched, with a sincere fervor, taking time to pause and periodically gaze at each individual board member. The board and all the attendees were riveted to her words, as she brought everything to the light. *This is fuck'n fantastic!* The genuine effrontery, which she and her daughter had experienced at the hands of the racist school bus driver, was plainly laid bare to both the public, and to the TV camera, as was her child's subsequent humiliation, illness, and loss of school days, as well as her loss of money, due to her lost work.

In the emotional timbre of her voice, her rigid bolt-upright body posture, and eventually in the slight sneer of her upper lip, the sincerity of her words were made eminently clear. *There's not denying her honesty, no refuting her words.* Half way through her presentation, her tears testified to the truth, she spoke. She described the abuse her child had

sustained at the hands of the bus driver, her child's subsequent falling behind in school, the loss of money due to having to be off work, as well as doctor and medicine bills. She nailed the superintendent for not living up to his promises, as well as for his ignoring the many calls made to his office. The mother's speech captured the hearts of everyone in the room. People began to harshly stare at the Super. *He sure looks bad!* He looked desperate, and had begun to blink rapidly. *He's trying to think of something to save his ass.* The mother directly addressed the Super.

“...And, please sir... after I'm finished talking, don't try to make some phony excuse about not having adequate time to investigate, or that you're still in the process of looking into it, after all the calls that I made, and that the newspaper made to your office, which went purposely ignored and unanswered... not so much as a single return call. You're just another dishonest politician, who never had any intention of pursuing this disgusting racist issue! That head of transportation, who takes three hour lunches, every day, is probably your *KKK* buddy, with his ugly *KKK* blood drop tattoo. And, he proud of it! That tattoo is supposed to be the tears

Jesus shed for the Aryan race, having to put up with the minorities like my child! You and people like you are the reason racism continues. There is no doubt that you've been protecting that despicable racist bus driver and her racist uncle, the head of School Transportation, both of which are *KKK* members, and they don't even try to hide it. Besides, he's got six of his relatives working for him. I think they call that, klan nepotism..." *Defiantly, she has gotten everyone's attention!*

He knows nothing; and he thinks he knows everything. That points clearly to a political career.
George Bernard Shaw, [Major Barbara](#)

As the mother continued with her presentation, the superintendent looked as if he'd been caught on camera coming out of a cheap motel room, his pants still unzipped, with a smiling transvestite hooker clinging to his arm. The mother was mopping the floor with him, and was yet well inside her allotted five minute time limit. But that's when the Super suddenly glanced over his shoulder at the wall. *Why did he look behind himself?* He was trapped, and being forced to eat one mouthful after another, of warm smelly horse pucky, which the adamant mother was

so eloquently serving-up. The situation was nothing short of magnificent, and I was fighting hard to keep from laughing. So thoroughly did I enjoy his well deserved public humiliation, that I felt sort of high.

The sturdy black mother had barely uttered the catchy phrase “klan nepotism,” when the superintendent again mysteriously looked at the wall behind himself. *What’s he doing?* For damage control, the desperate Super reached back, extended his long thin arm, and flipped a small switch, affixed to the wall. Throwing that oddly placed wall switch succeeded in doing three things. First, it turned-off the passionate mother’s microphone. Secondly, it made the few hundred attendees sit-up and realize the truth of the mother’s statement. Thirdly, it turned-on a particularly dangerous group of neurons buried deep within the mother’s already overactive limbic brain. It was that cluster of brain cells, which formed the pure distilled essence of what is commonly known as, blind murderous rage! It was the same piece of brain tissue, which for weeks, the mother had been struggling to control, and with the Super’s turning off the wall switch, her control had entirely disappeared.

Ever since her child had been so cruelly and

dangerously abused by the redneck female bus driver, those pernicious neurons had been barely held in check, ergo they desperately needed to release their pent-up stores of neurotransmitter. In brain studies, involving the neuroimaging of anger, the lateral orbitofrontal cortex was most frequently the activated region... (*International Handbook of Anger. Chap. 4: Constructing a Neurology of Anger. Michael Potegal and Gerhard Stemmler. 2010*). Once the wall switch was thrown, the mother's lateral orbitofrontal cortex was probably so lit-up so brightly, it could have been seen, by a near-sighted astronaut from a geostationary orbit. *Holy shit! Here it comes!* After throwing the switch, the Super was in grave danger, and at a loss about what to do next.

He made no attempt to explain his action, but just stared blankly at the infuriated mother, while everyone in the hushed room watched both of them. The Super just continued blinking. *This is wonderful!* Every word the mother had uttered was undeniably true. The audience waited for someone to take the lead, then a woman in the audience yelled to turn the mike back on. Another person yelled, "You can't do that (cut off the microphone), even if you're the Super! You got to turn it back on, man." The camera

kept rolling, panning the mother and the skittish, superintendent.

Most probably, the Super had been hoping that with the microphone being off, the mother would merely give-up and sat back down. For just a moment, the room and all the attendees seemed like they were in suspended animation. A collective ‘what’s next’ had formed everyone’s mind. Suddenly, the Super again grabbed his gavel and smacked it into the table to further signify the end of the meeting, as he croaked out.

“This meeting is now adjured!”

Bu, the Super made this proclamation an octave too high, whence it came out more like the voice of a four year old child, who had been caught with his hand in the cookie jar. No one seconded his motion, and no one moved to leave. Everyone just sat there and watched him and the mother. A scowl of deadly fury burned across the mother’s face, causing the whites of her teeth and eyes to flash, as her nostrils flared. Her notes slid from her hands onto the floor, and she tightened her grip on the pole, supporting the SCHOOL BUS FROM HELL sign, my homemade battle-ax. The muscles in her forearms clearly flexed as she lifted the twenty-five pound weapon, just

above her head. Correspondingly, the Super's face went pale with panic. His eyebrows jumped up, like a pair of frightened hairy brown grasshoppers. He correctly read the mother's mind, and his spindly frame awkwardly sprang-up from his leather throne. Throughout all this, the television camera on its wooden tripod remained focused dead on the mother and the Super, recording each nuance.

From my first meeting with the duplicitous superintendent, it was easy to see that he had probably never lettered in sports. Albeit tall, he appeared to have the strength and coordination of an anorexic fourteen year-old female, and the bold courage of a baby rabbit. The rest of the board was mystified, by the unexpected turn of events, but having heard the mother's well-crafted and superbly delivered speech, they were buying the mother's legitimate right to her anger. Everyone was content to just watch the amusing drama play-out. More than a few were smiling and barely shaking their heads from side to side trying to conceal their irrepressible smiles. Others were staring hard at the Super, who didn't wait for someone to second his panicked motion, but swiftly quick-stepped and side-shuffled along the back wall, behind the other board

members, who were still in their chairs. Everyone had thoroughly enjoyed the mother's accusations, and the Super's apparent panic. Probably, some of the board were contemplating running for the Super's job, since the majority of politicians secretly enjoy the failures of their compatriots.

A glance at the other board members, had no doubt allowed the Super to witness the departure of his power, and his ill founded respectability in their faces. The rage-filled mother, was then moving in his direction, with her battle-ax still raised high. *Thank God this meeting room has a high ceiling.* And so, the Super had become acutely intent on rapidly reaching the exit, where I still waited, just outside in the hall. Since the camera was pointed at the Super, I briefly leaned in to observe the situation, while being careful to keep my face down, and to not to look directly at the TV camera. The villainous superintendent was hurriedly moving and headed in my direction, but so was the battle-ax toting matriarch!

At this point, the terrified Super was on his own. Not a drop of sympathy existed anywhere in the room; not a soul was trying to help him, after the things mother had truthfully spoken. In those days,

there were no security guards or policemen in the school board meetings, so no one was there to come to his rescue. But after that day, every school board meeting in Mobile, would have an armed policeman in attendance.

The television news camera was recording everything. A quick glance told me that the cameraman was swiveling the camera on its axis, perfectly tracking the Super, as he clumsily ran and shuffled along the back wall, panic stricken, and hell-bent on reaching the exit, and escaping from the mother. It was also clear that the mother had been transformed into a mobile high stepping threat. I was shocked at how fast she was sprinting, but due to the people in her way, she'd had to periodically adjust her charge, running and shuffling between the rows of people, holding her battle-ax afloat, while trying to cut the Super off, before he could make good his getaway, where I stood. Standing in the threshold of the door, I kept my face lowered so the camera wouldn't get a good shot of me. The fast moving situation was riveting. In order to maintain anonymity, I'd decided that when the camera swilled to include me, I was going to play the part of a latecomer, looking for a place to sit down.

It was astonishing how quickly the reins of control had slipped from the Super's grasp. The mother's earnest presentation had literally stopped any rescue attempt for him. No one on the board, nor in the audience, made the slightest effort to intervene. The audience was ninety percent women, twenty percent black females, and all concerned mothers. I was witnessing a historical moment, where a significant piece of southern racism was in the process of dying a well deserved and long overdue death! At the time, I thought that if the Super escaped, it might make the mother's presentation seem hollow. Later, I'd realize that what I was about to do was the wrong thing... 20-20 hindsight.

For a non-athlete, the Super moved fairly quickly and it soon became apparent that he was going to escape, through my doorway, just ahead of the angry black mother with her twenty-five pound yellow plywood battle ax. *That twenty-five pounds is slowing her down.* With the weapon raised above her head, she was charging full speed, but she was somewhat further from the exit, than the Super, and he'd gotten a head start. Moreover, he had less people in his path. Commit to being filmed, I stepped one step

over the threshold into the meeting room, slightly in the direction of the oncoming Super, scanning the room for a seat, as a latecomer might do.

Though the mother was a few inches shorter than the superintendent, she had him by a good forty pounds, and those pounds were solid muscle; thighs, shoulders, and arms. *She must do physical labor for work.* Watching her bolt across the room, I speculated that at some point in her life, she had been a track and field sprinter. Whether from fear or because of sympathy, people in the meeting room leaned back to better clear a path for her. Luckily, she had worn tennis shoes, and not high heels. Certainly, with all the time the mother had put into crafting and rehearsing her effective speech, not to mention the hours I had put into making the school bus shaped battle-ax, it seemed like it would be a real shame, if the rat escaped the trap; and right then, it looked as if he would get to the exit door first, and slip away. The mother just had a few too many people in her way. The camera was then pointing at me, so I had slightly lowered my face and stepped further into the room.

As the politician hurriedly neared the exit, I stepped slightly more to my left, since that was the

direction, from which the Super was fast approaching. For the camera's sake, which I assumed was probably just then panning me, I continued to play the latecomer looking for a seat, acting as if I was completely unaware of what was transpiring, and I pretended not to notice the oncoming Super, nor the mother. During this act, I tried not to present my face directly to the camera. The Super was running hard at me, and my peripheral vision told me that I was strategically in the way of his planned escape; right where I wanted to be.

It was easy to see the black mother was coming fast and hard, but just a few feet further away than the Super. Her teeth were bared and her eyes fiercely burned... a proud angry lioness fast closing in on the mangy hyena, which had allowed harm to be inflicted her innocent cub. Cutting my eyes to the side, I saw the unmistakeable fear in the Super's wide eyes. He was definitely afraid of the oncoming wrathful mother; so much so, he failed to recognize me. He was only aware of the exit door behind me, and the weapon welding predator, bearing-down hard on his six. The Super moved to go around me.

Faking surprise, and that I was trying to get out of the Super's way, I deftly stepped directly into his

desperate detour, momentarily blocking his escape route. Simultaneously, I acted flustered and said, “Oh! Excuse me, sir!” All the while, I kept my face down. Plainly, the Super could feel the breath of the lioness, fast closing on his hind quarters.

The unnerved Super then shifted his momentum to his left, to go around me and escape out the exit, but again I moved to my right, to ‘accidentally’ block him, saying, “Whoops! Gees my mistake. Sorry, sir!” My maneuvering was easy, like being a guard on the basketball court, keeping an opponent from charging the goal and scoring; only the Super was so much easier, since he lacked speed and coordination. It was then, that the forlorn Super had no choice but to bump into, and push hard up against, me. Intentionally, I gave a tiny bit of ground. Mildly chuckling, as if I was embarrassed by the accidental encounters, I tried my best to seem shocked and surprised, still pretending to be unaware of the mother’s coming-up behind him. My two brief maneuvers had given the black mother the time she needed to reach her quarry, and I then saw murder in her eyes. That’s when I became afraid for the worthless Super, and didn’t need to fake a look of surprise.

As the twenty-five pound solid wood SCHOOL BUS FROM HELL began its rapid downward arcing acceleration, I could see it was aimed directly for the back of the Super's skull, so as to save him from a potentially deadly blow, I pulled him forward while quickly moving out of his way. That way, the Super, who had been pushing hard up against me, instantly fell forward, a fraction of a second before the sign struck home. Consequently, the leading edge of the heavy yellow plywood sign slammed hard into the upper right side of his back; instead, of his skull. There are moments in life, when it's all about timing.

On impact, there was a few loud muffled cracks. At first, I thought the cracking sounds might have come from the breaking of the wooden handle of the sign. But, a quick glance at the sign indicated the hardwood handle and its five brass screws had held. Later that evening, x-rays would show that the audible cracks had been made by the breaking of three ribs, located between the Super's back bone and his right shoulder blade. To his credit, he didn't cry-out, even though, the single blow had knocked him flat, face-down onto the hardwood floor, and partially out the door. *Thank God, she didn't hit him in the head!* A second later, and in front of over two or

three hundred witnesses, not to mention the TV camera and its broadcast area, the superintendent sprang to his feet, and like a dog with his tail between his legs, he flew down the hallway, before the angry mother could again raise the heavy wooden weapon, for the *coupe de grace*. Hearing a distant door slam somewhere deep in the building, I assumed that the terrified superintendent had locked himself, inside a room.

That night, the Super's big *Mercedes S420* sat in the dark parking lot for a good half hour, after everyone else had gone home. Just down the street, I sat in my beat-up old truck, watching the *Mercedes*, and listening to an oldies station on the car radio. The Mobile DJ, Mary Martini, *The Princess of Rock'n Roll*, was spinning the old vinyl discs that night. She always sounded so hard and provocative on the radio. I always imagined her to be like a sexy hardcore chain-smoking ever horny nymphomaniac.

Her voice was rough, not too dissimilar from the famous down-to-earth Janice Joplin. Janice wasn't much to look at, and her voice patently lacked a certain technical quality, but her heart and sincerity blew me away. *REO Speed Wagon's*, *Roll With The Changes* was blowing-up the night, when the

Mercedes' headlights popped on. The Super pulled-out of the parking-lot, turned left, and made a beeline straight to the nearest hospital, about a mile away, I'd followed at a distance, then watched him park in the hospital parking lot and painfully amble into the ER.

[https://video.search.yahoo.com/search/video?
fr=yfp-t&p=janice
+joplin#id=1&vid=ecc6a143aad8162fccf7599d9a8f6440](https://video.search.yahoo.com/search/video?fr=yfp-t&p=janice+joplin#id=1&vid=ecc6a143aad8162fccf7599d9a8f6440)

Later, I would obtain the aforementioned medical information about the Super's three broken ribs, from a janitor, who worked at the school board. Apparently, the Super had not told the emergency room staff, about how he received the injury, since no police arrived to take a report. I was praying that the mother wouldn't be arrested, yet even though her assault and battery played on the ten o'clock news, she was never arrested. Because of the strong mother's ability to so easily carry and swing the sign, it made the sign look light weight. The Super's getting knocked flat looked like he'd slipped.

That school board meeting was the talk of the

school system, if not the whole city, for a couple weeks. The white newspaper, the *Mobile News Register*, didn't cover it, because its editors tended to sympathize with the local racists, and I didn't write it up, in *The Mobile Voice*, for fear of being pegged as being complicit, in the Super's injury. After all, I had constructed the school bus sign. Besides, the mother had gotten her sweet revenge, and there was no point in getting overly greedy.

That night in the meeting room, with her foe vanquished, the black mother had used her sign as a staff to prop herself up. She was breathing hard and fast, as her face slowly morphed from angry predator, back into that of a jubilant triumphant mother. The sneer of anger smoothly transformed into a beatific smile. She glanced up at me and a twinkle shot from her eyes. Remembering that the TV camera was still rolling, I acted like I didn't notice, and walked out of the camera's view.

The news crew moved in, surrounded her, putting a mike in her face, and pelting her with well prepared questions. *This is perfect!* As promised, she didn't mention my having made the sign. Unlike the Super, she was true to her word. At one point, one of the news people told her that it was a 'most effective'

sign. To which she thankfully replied,

“Thank you. It was a lot of work for one of my friends.”

She looked as if she completely enjoyed the news crew’s attentions, and was not the slightest bit camera shy. People were finally listening about how her child had been wronged. The news reporter asked her how she’d found out about the nepotism in the transportation department and she simply said that she had friends, who worked in the transportation department, who didn’t wish to be named for fear of being fired. *She’s great!* She’d gone from being ignored and swept under the political carpet, to standing tall in the limelight.

The board members and the audience paid close attention as she answered their questions. Amazingly, no one called the police. None of the board members bothered to adjourn the meeting. They simply left after the mother had finished her interview. The Super had been wrong on all counts, and clearly he’d known she’d spoken only the cold hard truth. He also realized that if the situation had gone to court, he would most likely have become an even bigger laughing-stock, than he already was. If you’re white, in order to appreciate the black mother’s violent

behavior, you need only take a minute to imagine that the school bus incident had happened to your sweet little innocent white daughter; and for added realism, imagine that the female school bus driver is black and seriously hates your white kids, only because your daughter is white, and the bus driver belongs to the *Black Panthers*; instead of the *KKK*. Imagine that your sweet and innocent child was screamed at, threatened, and ordered out into a dangerous highway, during a torrential downpour, just to satisfy the black bus driver's potent racial hatred. In addition, imagine that your sweet white daughter had become seriously ill, because of that bigoted black bus driver's hatred, and therefore fell behind in her studies, and that her medical bills were large enough that they put a serious hurt on your finances, so much so, that you were forced to borrow money. Oh, and don't forget about the cost of her hairdo, which you could ill afford to pay. And, there's the black superintendent, who tries to cover for his black friend, who heads-up the school transportation. Lastly, the black Super attempts to stop your speech, your earnest public appeal, your only hope for justice.

It's not hard to imagine these things, if you just

honestly try, but if you're white, you probably won't take the time. The problem with many good, well intended, white people is that they think that discrimination against blacks is something of the past; that it's now extinct like the dinosaurs, and that many blacks are blaming their failings on racism. And granted, in some cases, that is indeed true. Nevertheless, in many cases, the black person has actually been discriminated against. Part of the inability of many whites to realize that white-against-black discrimination really occurs is that they don't know too many black people, nor do they want to. Their knowledge of blacks is generally limited: a black clerk at the corner store, the black guy who cuts their grass, blacks being arrested on TV, etc. And now, with more reverse discrimination occurring, especially in the schools, it is easy to view 'all blacks' as problematic, when in fact most blacks are good people.

[https://video.search.yahoo.com/search/video?
fr=yfp-t&p=white+cops+shooting+black+man
+video#id=1&vid=9d12639b48fc349ef41e7cd0f22171c9](https://video.search.yahoo.com/search/video?fr=yfp-t&p=white+cops+shooting+black+man+video#id=1&vid=9d12639b48fc349ef41e7cd0f22171c9)

Also, part of the reason for such perceptions may

be owing to the fact that there are many good white people, who are quick to assume that the wrongs perpetuated against blacks aren't real, since they (the good white people) don't commit such deeds themselves, and the evil whites who do commit the discrimination against blacks, are skilled at telling the good whites that the blacks are lying about being discriminated against. Because I live in Mobile, I know many racists, but not a one of them considers themselves to be a racist! Due to the cases where discrimination against black was indeed contrived, and the fact that most blacks' lack fiscal power, the majority of cases of white-against-black discrimination rarely get reported by the media, unless someone happens to catch it on a camera, or the black community threatens to riot, as has been the case in Houston, where certain blacks shot some cops. Private cellphone cameras have put many people on notice.

<http://www.houstonchronicle.com/business/texanomics/article/Houston-still-has-a-racial-problem-when-it-comes-8378298.php>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/08/us/>

south-carolina-officer-is-charged-with-murder-in-black-mans-death.html

However, if those things (the racist school bus driver things) did happen to your child, might not you consider revenge? To better appreciate any racial issue, just take one honest minute to put yourself in the other guy's shoes. To understand certain racial situation, you only need to take a little time for actual empathy, to understand the other person's point of view, instead of all the justifications, that you've developed through years of being propagandized by skillful white racial bigots. If you're white, upon hearing about a case of racial discrimination, how many times have you actually tried to understand the black person's perspective, or have you simply listened to your white friends, and the white controlled media, and assumed the black people were overreacting, lying, exaggerating, or deserving of what they got? A black man gets killed and suddenly bad things are being brought-up about his past, which may indeed be true, but have nothing to do with the unjust killing, and just watch to see what happens to the killer. On the other hand, if an unarmed white guy gets shot, by a racist black cop, it

probably won't make national news. Discrimination comes in many varieties. About twice as many unarmed white guys get shot, as do blacks, but they're not big news. Why?

At home that night, I fired-up my old VCR to watch the news coverage school board meeting. Laughter is my third favorite thing. My child's happiness is first. Of course, the black mother was never arrested, and the superintendent was not re-elected. In fact, until his term was up, he served his role as superintendent, with considerable humility. Every now and then, justice is served.

Originally, I'd been hired by the newspaper to write editorials, not to cover stories, but certainly not to create the news. I figured that Jess wouldn't have approved of my actions, as a reporter, yet the next day he loved hearing about what had happened in the school board meeting, ergo the penny-pinching Jess actually bought me lunch that afternoon... miracles never cease. It would be the only time he bought me anything. Nevertheless, in the long run, Jess gave me a great gift... to be able to write about things of consequence, see them published, and feel like I made a small difference. For those things, I remain in his debt.

As mentioned, the bigoted bus driver did not lose her job, but was instead given a shorter easier all-white route, where she couldn't harass black children. Still, she probably continued to express her racism with not so subtle comments, attempting to poison the malleable young white minds, against blacks, Jews, Catholics, and whatever other folks happened to make her insecure. Oh well, nothing's perfect and certainly not the Alabama legal and educational systems. Alabama has an abysmal educational system, compared to other states. The United States is about fifteenth from the top in education, so Mobile has a few light years to go, before being considered the Mecca of education and justice. The sad thing is that far too few Alabamians care about impartial justice and quality education. Racism needs to expire, and go the way of the T-rex and the dodo bird. Here in the South, with the death of my generation, will go a large percentage of hateful racists, and they will become a minority.

Conceivably, bigotry will be forced to die, as more of the races co-mingle. In the 1950s, very rarely would I see an interracial couple, and while they indeed existed, usually hidden from the public eye, I'm positive they weren't nearly as common as

now. As the decades passed, more mixed couples have appeared, and even in the upper echelons of society. Now, interracial couples can be seen even throughout the Deep South. Perhaps, President Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings started the ball rolling. If the percentage of mixed couples continues to rise, in a few more years, they may become just as common as other types of couples, and eventually with enough fraternization and fertilization, racism may literally become impossible. There will always be haters, but without clear racial phenotypes, racism must cease.

The POTUS, Barack Hussein Obama II is the product of such a relationship. If anyone in the 1950s or 1960s, white or black, had asked me if there would ever be a mixed president; my answer would have been an emphatic, "That is impossible! There's just too many bigots for anything like that to ever happen." Back then, I never dreamed that a racially mixed man could become president! Foreseeably, one day the entire earth will be a thoroughly blended great goopy melting pot, with no more clearcut blacks, no more definitive whites, no more distinctly Asians, no well defined Arabs, no more pure latinos, etc., just various blends, with no more peoples of any

particular race. Then the racists of the world will have to find something different to hate, which I'm positive they will. It could be, that they'll start arguing over various genes combinations. Too many people love to hate, and hate to love. It's all about the wiring of the gray mush. By rummaging through the genes of roughly seventy-eight thousand people, scientists have found forty genes that may make certain people brighter. That brings the total number of possible "intelligence genes" to fifty-two. Genes may also be somewhat responsible for kindness and altruism, but the haters of the world won't care about those genes.

<https://www.nature.com/articles/ng.3869>

<http://healthland.time.com/2012/04/16/human-kindness-genes-withstand-threats-and-fear/>

As mentioned, it doesn't matter what race you are, or if you're ugly or good looking, famous or unknown, weak or strong, smart or slow, rich or poor, gay or straight, or religious or atheist. Perchance the only thing that does matter about any of us is the good we do before we vacate the big blue

marble, as one day, we doubtlessly will. One of the things, I was taught in the *Boy Scouts*, was to leave your campsite nicer, than when you arrived. Too bad, I wasn't a better listener, for while on this earth, there's no doubt, I've probably done more harm than good. Dr. King once said something about judging people on the content of their character; loosely put... by the good they do. Conceivably one's behavior and one's deeds is, in some measure, indicative of their belief. There is no more effective way to quantify or verify the concept of belief. By-in-large, one's behavior often says it all. You can yell at the top of your lungs that you believe, but it means nothing in comparison to what you do, and how you treat people! Regardless of anything written in a holy text or what some sermon may have contained, this deduction isn't exactly rocket science folks. Bad deeds means no belief! Certainly, the heavy duty sinner loves the idea of making it to heaven by simply telling other people that he or she believes, but again, I would say that belief isn't so much what you profess, as what you do. Try telling your fellow Christian that you don't believe, then carefully observe their response. Are their facial expressions and words designed to actually save your eternal soul, or are they trying to make sure that they

themselves believe? Honestly, if a discussion turns into an argument, and your eternal soul is at stake, what does that tell you about their belief?

If God is the essence of goodness, where does that leave the haters?

The Red Hot Forever by Yers Al Morello

My gut feeling is that most racists think they are true believers, yet they don't really believe, simply because they don't believe in goodness. In the South, most racists, say they're Christians, just like Mr. Purple had said that day at the *KKK* meeting. In fact, many people, who use the 'N' word don't feel they are racist, saying that they use the 'N' word, only when referring to the bad or lazy black people. They often say this, so convincingly, as if they believe it. Part of what gives these racists away is the exuberance with which they use the 'N' word. They clearly enjoy using the word; it like a psych release. Moreover, they tend to infrequently use the terms: black or African American.

Perhaps the best lairs are the ones that convince themselves, that they are good and kind, when in fact

they aren't; or, maybe I should say they're the worst liars, depending if you choose effect or morality. Of course, with almost every lie, the liar has to fool themselves, even if they know they're lying. In dealing with all peoples, where possible, it might be useful to find common ground, instead of focusing on uncomfortable differences. For some people, it may be difficult to believe that a person of another race could one day be their friend. And, don't think for a moment that because you may be of a particular race, that you should feel inferior or superior. Be glad that you have the opportunity to live and help others, regardless of race, religion, culture, sex or sexual orientation, age, looks, etc. As long as humans have been on the planet, there's a fair chance that few people's DNA belongs to only one race, unless it's the human race. The last nine words of Ms. Frank's quote (below) may not always be true; still it sounds good.

Human greatness does not lie in wealth or power, but in character and goodness. People are just people, and all people have faults and shortcomings, but all of us are born with a basic goodness.

Anne Frank